

The Story of the Old White Church

Plymouth
New Hampshire

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The Story of the Old White Church

Plymouth
New Hampshire

Published by
Mrs. George H. Bowles

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INTRODUCTION

At the suggestion of Rev. Deane L. Hodges, pastor of the Congregational Church in Plymouth, New Hampshire, a series of historical articles were compiled by Mrs. Guy E. Speare for the "Church Family News" that were mimeographed from month to month, beginning in 1953.

The intention was to acquaint the congregation with the story of this church from the beginning in Hollis, New Hampshire in 1764 to the present time, since many who participate in the services of the life of the church are too recent arrivals in the town to have acquired but little knowledge about the many years of influence that this church has exerted among the inhabitants of Plymouth.

After many readers had expressed a desire that these articles might appear in printed form, Mrs. George H. Bowles requested that Mrs. Speare prepare a copy for the printer. Since space in the News was limited, explanations were often omitted that are now included within these pages.

Illustrations increase the pleasure of possession of an historical story. A few of the prominent persons and landmarks that are mentioned have been included.

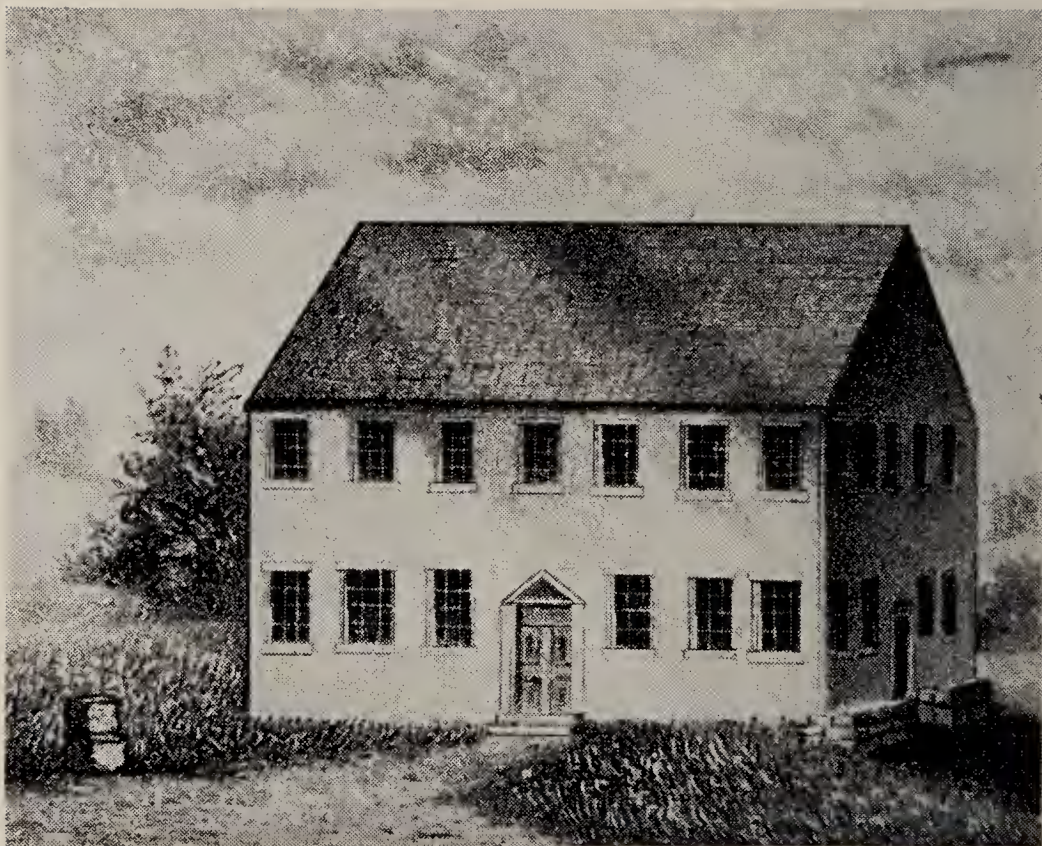
To Mrs. Bowles the gratitude of all readers is due for her generous desire to bear the expense of publication of these historical incidents that have been collected from books about Plymouth and from the lips of aged citizens, many now beyond recall. Whatever amount accrues from the sale of these books will be used to purchase worth while books for readers who patronize the Book Table that stands in the rear of the pews within the church.

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THE MEETINGHOUSE AT HOLLIS—1746

Here the organization of the church of Plymouth was formed on April 16, 1764. The horse block on the left was used by women to mount and be seated on the pommel of a saddle.

Chapter I

THE ORIGINAL CHURCH

Viewed through a perspective of years, the date of April 16, 1764, when our church was organized, is of primary importance to the Town of Plymouth, New Hampshire.

It should be emphasized that two hundred years ago the "church" was an organization of people. The word did not apply to a religious service or to a building dedicated to religious functions. At that period the term, orthodox, distinguished the Congregationalists from the Unitarian or Universalist faith. The Plymouth faith was designated as Trinitarian Congregational doctrine.

Such churches were independent of any ecclesiastical control; each determined its own policy and democratic government. The members pledged themselves with a "Covenant" with God and with one another which bound them to certain religious principles.

A Council had been established among the Congregational churches of New England that consisted of representatives who would offer advice about the ordination of a candidate for the ministry, or in some cases for discipline of wayward members, and would assist in the solemn ceremony of installing a minister in a town.

The organization of our church was constituted at Hollis, New Hampshire, where many of the heads of families were preparing to remove to a grant between the Pemigewasset River and Newfound Pond to be named, Plymouth.

The menace of raids by hostile Indians was near the end and men with money to invest were organizing corporations to which Benning Wentworth, Governor of the Province of New Hampshire, was granting tracts of unsettled wilderness which the grantees hoped to sell for a profit. The Charter for the Grant of Plymouth was issued to sixty-two men on July 15, 1763.

The grantees were obligated to clear a road from the mouth of the Smith River to their grant, to set up saw and grist mills, to build highways and bridges within their grant and to erect a meetinghouse and provide a salary for a settled minister. This last obligation indicates that the town, not the church, was responsible for the maintenance of religion not only in Plymouth but every town in New Hampshire. When a grantee sold his property, the purchaser assumed the taxes for the obligations.

About one third of these grantees were living in Hollis. Several of them scouted in the grant in 1762. A surveyor had already laid out the limits of the lots on the intervale meadows and preparations for the settlement were advancing rapidly in 1764. In the spring of that year, men in Hollis who were members of the church there, decided upon a plan of action that proved both wise and strategic. On the sixteenth of April, they organized a church composed of members in Hollis who were intending to remove to Plymouth. Note that men, not women, were responsible, for women were not supposed to be capable of voting, although the wives were admitted to membership and even honorable, unmarried women were accepted.

As often came to pass, the written records of this early church were destroyed by fire and no list of the members has been preserved. John Willoughby was deacon from 1766 to 1834; Stephen Webster, from 1767 to 1798; and Francis Worcester, from 1770 to 1792.

John Willoughby was a young man, had served three years in the French and Indian War, was one of the grantees and explorers of the grant in 1762. He shouldered his musket in 1776, fought at Bennington and was a captain of a company at Saratoga. His home was about where the Starr King Elm was then growing, where he raised twelve children. He died at the age of ninety-eight with a reputation that "every remembrance of him was blameless and loveable" to quote from the eulogy at his funeral.

Stephen Webster was said to have been educated "beyond the measure of his time" and opened his home for a school as he was a teacher by profession. Also, he filled the offices of moderator and clerk for the early settlement.

Francis Worcester should be especially remembered for his efforts in conjunction with Samuel Livermore, to change the opinions of the Grafton County representatives to the Constitutional convention who were opposed to ratification of the Federal Constitution.

In a paper before Asquamchumauke Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, Miss Caroline W. Mudgett described how Mr. Worcester traveled on horseback from delegate to delegate, not only in Grafton County but to other counties, to explain away the objections to ratification. When the final convention assembled, the vote was 57 to 47 on June 21, 1788 and thus New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify and made the Constitution operative.

A highly educated, cultured leader, Mr. Worcester held office in the Council and the State Senate during many years and served on committees at the same time in both county and town.

The above biographical sketches testify to the caliber of the men who were most influential in the beginning of our church, two hundred years ago.

On the day that the church was organized, the proprietors of the grant announced that Rev. Nathan Ward of Newton, Massachusetts was to become the minister for the new township. Mr. Ward was forty-three years of age and his family consisted of a wife and ten children. From the extant records of the Proprietors the fact is gleaned that Mr. Ward went to Hollis and Abel Webster was paid twenty pounds, old tenor, for his board for ten days. The Proprietors engaged him to preach four times and doubtless these sermons were delivered in Hollis.

Mr. Ward had been ordained to the ministry in Newton where he was pastor of a so-called "independent" church for several years after he was thirty years of age. The ceremony of installing a Congregational minister was considered important and only if a Council of Churches from the county voted its approval, was a minister properly inducted into his position in a town. Here was a dilemma, because no church or county then existed in this part of New Hampshire. Accordingly, "Parson" Ward was installed in a ceremony at the Congregational meetinghouse at Newburyport, Massachusetts on July 11, 1765. He then came to Plymouth and remained as minister over both church and town until 1798. He died in 1804.

The Proprietors did not erect a meetinghouse for several years. Public worship was observed at the tavern of Captain David Webster. By a law of the Colony of New Hampshire, every township must provide a tavern for the entertainment of strangers. David Webster began his log house in the summer of 1763, it is said, and enlarged it to tavern size the following year. This stood on the site of the present railroad station, probably beside a brook that flowed off the hill through the Common and into the river, says a tradition.

The oldest street in town is Webster Street, beside the Plymouth Inn. It probably was a section of a pathway that wound its way to the foot of Ward Hill. On the north side of

this path, about where the house of Dr. Learned stands, number ninety-seven Highland Street, the first log meetinghouse was begun in 1768, but was not “comfortably” furnished until 1770. This meant that a pulpit was constructed and backless benches of split logs with angled legs were supplied, for the men on one side of the room and for the women on the other side of the center aisle. There were no windows, but openings covered with oiled material, and no heat was available.



A TYPICAL LOG MEETINGHOUSE OF 1768

Around this log house, the dead were buried in forgotten graves. Field stones marked their graves and the roadway of Highland Street now covers their dust. When excavations were made some years ago for the concrete road, the workmen uncovered stones that were so placed that they probably marked unknown graves.

That the organization of our church was timely may be proved by the fact that this and the Congregational Church at Blair were the only two of the denomination in this vicinity. In Campton a meetinghouse was erected on either side of the Pemigewasset River. About 1840, the frame of the building at Blair was moved across the river and is now the frame of the present Congregational Church near the townhouse at Campton.

Religious controversies were rife in 1764. The doctrines of Rev. Jonathan Edwards, most influential Congregational preacher, and the sermons of Rev. George Whitefield who founded the Methodist denomination in New England, were then arousing religious factions. A number of the grantees who settled in Plymouth were Baptists and in the surrounding grants in Rumney, Campton, New Hampton, and that section of Holderness which became Ashland, Baptist churches were established. In Holderness, the Episcopal denomination controlled through the influence of Mrs. Samuel Livermore, the daughter of the first rector of Queen's Chapel in Portsmouth, the first Church of England in the Colony in 1732. Opposite the Village of Plymouth in Holderness is an ancient cemetery on "Church Hill" where there are graves of the Cox and Shepard Families who were of the orthodox faith. There they planned to erect their meetinghouse, but Samuel Livermore was the owner of many miles of the lots in the town and held control of the greater amount of the taxes. Thus the Town of Holderness built no meetinghouse until 1797 and then the Episcopal Chapel, now standing by Trinity Church Yard, was erected and the taxpayers were compelled to contribute to the expense.

The conclusion is certain that April 16, 1764, was a most important date for our church and its religious influence in the Town of Plymouth. That this date was strategic may be accepted, since the men in Hollis decisively established the denominational pattern for their township.

Chapter II

THE WARD FAMILY

Fortunately the name of the first minister, Rev. Nathan Ward, will long be honored whenever Ward Hill is mentioned, the site of his home in Plymouth. He was of the fourth generation from the Yorkshire Englishman, William, who settled in Sudbury, Massachusetts. Nathan was born in Newton, Massachusetts on April 11, 1721. How he became the educated, cultured theologian is unknown, for in his youth he practiced farming and possibly carpentry. The two story house that he erected on Ward Hill was an example of skilled workmanship.

At the age of thirty years, Mr. Ward listened to the inspiring preaching of Rev. George Whitefield, and determined to devote his life to the Church. Two years previously, he married Tamasin Ireland of Charlestown, Massachusetts.

He was forty-three when he arrived with his wife and ten children in a pathless wilderness. Mr. George G. Clark, a man whose mind was saturated with historical facts about early Plymouth, is authority about the forest that covered the hills. Hardwood trees of immense height shaded the soil that was composted with the leafmould of ages. Many pioneers preferred this rich soil to the lowlands and for this reason, the trend was toward West Plymouth.

Mr. Ward was allotted four fifty-acre lots, two on Ward Hill, also another tract in the undivided section toward Newfound Pond which he exchanged for a lot in the Baker River

Range. He was paid thirty-six pounds for the settlement, probably to build his log cabin and move his family, and an annual salary of fifty pounds, about one hundred fifty dollars.

Mrs. Ernest C. Hunt, a great-granddaughter who resides at sixty Highland Street during the summer, kindly loaned the diary of Enoch, the second son, in which he stated, "Sir" (his title for his father) "brother Nathan and I first came to Plymouth on May 4, 1766." No doubt these two sons, eighteen and sixteen years of age, helped to roll up the cabin at the foot of Ward Hill and the family arrived when this primitive habitation was ready for occupancy. Three years later, this cabin burned. Enoch wrote, "House raised on October 1, 1770, moved into house February 22, 1771." Probably this was the house that Mr. Roy Deming razed on the top of Ward Hill, one hundred twenty-two Highland Street.

Ministers were usually the most prosperous men in the early towns, and prosperity followed Parson Ward. The tax on this minister-farmer in 1778 listed buildings, a horse, four oxen, five cows, and eight young cattle. A son, Jonathan was born in 1769, perchance the most distinguished in due time of the twelve children.

The year 1776 was tragic. Nathan, the oldest son, and two of his younger brothers and two sisters died in November or December. The following August, their Mother died leaving her husband with four sons from seven to eighteen years of age. No trace of the spot where Mrs. Ward was buried has been discovered. Possibly her dust lies at the foot of Ward Hill or in the cemetery on the bank of the Baker River on the farm of Mr. Arnold Spencer.

With four motherless boys to care for, naturally Mr. Ward found a second wife the next year, Miss Lydia Clough, daughter of Joseph Clough of Salem, Massachusetts. The History of Plymouth states that Miss Lydia was from Canterbury, and it

is possible that Rev. Ward met her at the home of her brother, Nehemiah who was a prominent Congregationalist in that township in later years.

Parson Ward, as he was called by his title, was a busy man. To understand the strenuous task of clearing his farm one has only to walk along the road by the present reservoir and notice the boulders in the uncleared woodlots. In her book, *Elizabeth Wilson*, Mrs. Henry Blair has given a description of the duties that fell to the minister. She tells that he taught the children of the parish to read and to memorize the Catechism. He was both religious and legal advisor in the parish, a dignified, kindly friend to everyone. Without doubt, the influence of Parson Ward largely determined the religious and educational standards of early Plymouth.

In 1782, a daughter was born to Lydia and this sixty-one-year-old father, who became the comfort of their old age. She married Isaac Stafford who built the house now owned by Mrs. Frank H. Foster at one hundred fifty Highland Street. There Nathan died in 1804 and Lydia survived him until 1823. The records of the Pleasant Valley Cemetery near the Smith covered bridge, begin about 1816, but this God's Acre must have been set apart for a cemetery at an earlier date. Near the gate in the granite wall along the highway is the Ward Lot in which the graves of both Nathan and Lydia are marked by marble headstones. Other members of the Ward Family are buried beside their parents.

The descendants of Nathan Ward were remarkable citizens. Enoch, the oldest surviving son, was a carpenter. He built the "Emerson House" at fifty Highland Street. His son, Enoch, Jr. built the Hunt residence at sixty Highland Street and one of these men probably built the "1820 House." The skill for carpentry followed on, for the house at one hundred fifty-two Highland Street belonged to a grandson, Arthur Ward.



REV. NATHAN WARD, FROM A SELF-PORTRAIT

Sons and grandsons graduated from Dartmouth, Amherst, Bowdoin, Union Theological Seminary and Andover, to become physicians, dentists, missionaries, clergymen, musicians or merchants. One was President of Rollins College, several were authors or editors of note.

The daughters were no less notable. Many married ministers or missionaries, others were able teachers, one at Perkins Institute for the Blind. There was an artist at the Salon in Paris, another in New York. A granddaughter was Principal of Mount Holyoke Seminary from 1872-1883.

A grandson married Elizabeth Stewart Phelps, the famous author, himself a well known writer. Mrs. Hunt is the daughter of Cornelius Ward, son of Enoch, Jr., a broker in New York City.

Many descendants of this family were owners of farms in Plymouth, Rumney and Campton. Others established mercantile industries in this vicinity and in the Middle West.

Readers will agree that a kind Providence guided the Church in Hollis in 1764 when Parson Ward was chosen to become the first pastor of our church.

Fortunately, Mrs. Hunt possesses many mementos of her ancestors, among them, likenesses of Parson Ward and his son, Rev. Jonathan Ward who served as pastor of the Plymouth church from 1818 to 1829. At the centennial of our church building in 1936, Mr. George G. Clark was permitted by Mrs. Hunt to copy the picture of Parson Ward that is reproduced for this chapter. The diary of Enoch Ward, mentioned previously, is an account of the business transactions that were recorded while the American Revolution was fought, when Enoch went to Boston to purchase supplies. The few pages reveal the customs of that period and prices of commodities.

There are other names of families who settled in the section of West Plymouth that are worthy of remembrance. Two an-

cient cemeteries contain headstones that bear these memorials. A drive on a Sabbath afternoon up the Baker River Valley to visit these God's Acres is suggested.

At a bar-way immediately south of the home of Selectman Arnold Spencer, the first stop is recommended. An elm will be the guide as one walks toward the river's bank where beneath its shade are a number of headstones from which time has almost erased the inscriptions. There a Revolutionary soldier sleeps. There is the oldest headstone in Plymouth at the grave of Bridget Snow. Beneath a crude "Death's Head" the inscription reads: "Here lies the Body of the Widow Bridget Snow (formerly the wife of Mr. Joseph Snow) who departed this life the 3 day of December 1773, in the 73 year of her Age."

The History of Plymouth states that Bridget was the wife of Joseph Snow who died in 1747 in the town now known as Hudson in southern New Hampshire. After 1764, their son Henry with his wife and five children came to Plymouth and is said to have lived on Huckins Hill. Evidently, Bridget and her two daughters followed this family hither and two older, married daughters arrived about the same year.

Mrs. Hattie Harriman Trow, who was born in 1857, whose uncle married a grandson of Bridget Snow, related these traditions. Bridget received a considerable amount of wealth at the death of her husband. When she arrived in Plymouth, she and her two daughters lived in a "Dug-out" that was excavated in the bank at the site of the Spencer homestead. It was customary for many pioneer families to roof an excavation with logs, chinked with sods, to provide shelter until a permanent house could be constructed.

The two daughters married before 1770 and Bridget may have lived with her son, Henry. The Dartmouth College Road was cut over Huckins Hill in 1771, the year that the eldest daughter of Bridget came to Hebron from Munson, N. H. The



THE OLDEST HEADSTONE IN PLYMOUTH
MEMENTO MORI ABOVE THE DEATHHEAD WAS A
LATIN PROVERB, "REMEMBER TO DIE," THAT IS,
ONE MUST DIE.

tale is related that Bridget followed this pathway, either on foot or horseback, to visit this daughter although the forest was so dense in Hebron that the wolves howled there even in daytime.

Bridget died in 1773 and was buried on land that doubtless she owned. During the floods that have inundated the meadows along the Baker River, there is a probability that burial lots in the ancient cemetery have been swept away. Today the ancient headstone, the oldest in Plymouth, that marks the grave of Bridget Snow stands on a precarious spot at the edge of the bank of the flood plain. These traditions illustrate the courage and endurance of a widow who dared to follow her children into an unsettled region. Her reputation should not fade from the Baker River Valley.

Mrs. Blanche Brackett Smith, who died in 1956, kindly told some facts about "The Pleasant Valley Cemetery," located near the Smith covered bridge, so-named for Jacob Smith who came to Plymouth in 1780. Mr. Clark loaned a plan that was dated 1815, yellowed with age yet legible. The tablet upon the gate states that the cemetery was established in 1814 and this original plan shows two lines of narrow lots on either side of an "alley" that was eleven feet wide. Here is a burying ground that is worthy of historical mention, especially in this story about the Congregational Church. The marble headstones are specimens of the skill of the handicraft of stone cutters before the present machine age.

As one enters the gate, the name of Deacon James Morrison is first noted. He was born in Windham, New Hampshire in 1783, came to Plymouth when a young man, became a deacon in the church and continued in office for twenty-five years. Our church was erected soon after he assumed this honored position.

The next lot belonged to Daniel Eaton, a lieutenant and a selectman for several years. His brother, Asa, was a pastor of the North Church in Boston, an interesting fact to note, after

Hurricane Edna destroyed the steeple in 1955.

The lots numbered five and seven bear stones that commemorate Isaac Ward and Rev. Nathan Ward and other members of his family. Here we pause to question, for the date on the stone reads that Rev. Nathan died June 15, 1804, some years before the cemetery was established. Probably this grave was here before others were laid to rest in this ground. Yet, according to the History of Plymouth, the first school teacher was Stephen Webster who died in 1798. On the original plan of the cemetery, a lot was owned by Mr. Webster. No stone marks his lot, number 22, although his dust may be lying under the grass of an unmarked grave.

The next date on a stone is 1809, previous to the date on the gate, for Ruth, the wife of William George, Esq. Pleasant Valley Cemetery contains the graves of many prominent citizens of a century and a half ago. Among them is Peter Flanders, the great-grandfather of Mrs. Blanche Smith, who was a potter in West Plymouth; also the lots belonging to the Cummings, Clark, Wells and George Families, all names in early Plymouth.

Perchance as we pass along the highway of Pleasant Valley, a name given to Route 25 by former residents, our thoughts may turn in reverence for these men and women who established the Town of Plymouth. They rest from their labors and their works do follow them.

Chapter III

THE SECOND MEETINGHOUSE ON WARD HILL

Ten busy years had passed since the crude log meetinghouse was built, and now repairs were necessary. Yet, in 1781, many obstacles convinced the voters that to build another was inexpedient. After the forest was cleared and the leaf-mould soil from the oaks and maples produced abundant crops, the American Revolution had created increased taxes in the form not of money, but of food.

It is well to realize that the tax for the year 1781 was for 7056 pounds of beef from the pioneers in Plymouth. In addition, several widows of soldiers and the families of others must be maintained. Fear of raids from the north, such as Vermont had suffered at Royalton, compelled the inhabitants to dispatch men to protect the frontiers when an alarm was sounded.

Although the need for a new meetinghouse was presented to the town meeting in 1783, not in that year or until 1787 was the building authorized. A committee was appointed to procure the frame, fifty-six by forty-five feet in complete order to raise. A tax of one hundred pounds was levied.

This was a stupendous undertaking. To be sure, giant oaks in the forest surrounding the village could be found that would cut a log of the required length, but to adz their trunks, cut mortise or tenon at the ends, with exact measurements, for the sills, girts, plates, crossbeams, rafters and ridgepole required strong muscles, because no machines had been invented.

In addition to this extra task, an increase in their crops was demanded by the colonial government. Before December 25th, a total tax of one hundred and thirty-nine pounds must be produced of "Merchantable wheat and pease at five shillings per bushel (\$1.65) or rye at four shillings, Indian corn at three shillings, no man to pay more than one fourth of his tax in pease."

By October, the frame was ready on Ward Hill, about on the site of the one room schoolhouse, a lot that was donated by Isaac Ward to the town and to this day, according to legal authority, the title to this plot reverts to the heirs of Isaac Ward, should the town no longer claim the property. The raising was accomplished "amidst the rejoicing of most of the entire male inhabitants of the town."

Not many details of this celebrated event were recorded. One unusual item states that ten pounds, one shilling was paid for beef for the noon feast. Since thirty-nine pounds was the total expense for the raising, doubtless a part of this money was to provide several barrels of rum according to the custom of the times.

Mr. George G. Clark relates that when the women, who probably cooked the feast, pleaded for a steeple, Col. David Webster, then forty-five years of age, climbed to the ridgepole, stood on his head and shouted, "I will be your steeple." From the age of nineteen, Col. Webster had fought Indians, a member of Robert Rogers' famous troop of Rangers, and was noted in the town for his ability to produce whatever he attempted to undertake.

Evidently there was some delay in the progress of the building. Probably to hasten the building committee, some disgruntled person set fire to the log meetinghouse. As in the beginning of the settlement, Webster's Tavern accommodated for small gatherings, and King George's barn for Sabbath services.



THE BARN AT THE HATCH DAIRY

THE FRAME IS THE ORIGINAL KING GEORGE'S
BARN THAT WAS THE MEETING PLACE IN 1788.

Among a collection of films belonging to Mr. Clark, one was discovered, marked "King George's Barn where the people attended church while the second meetinghouse was being erected," and was also marked, "Hatch." Inquiry with Mr. Cecil Hatch reveals that the land on the opposite side of the highway at the Hatch Dairy was the property of the George Family until the present century. Mr. Hatch believes that the barn at the Hatch Dairy stood on the hill in the vicinity of the former Rutherford house, now owned by Mr. Fred Speed. The oak frame was taken apart, moved to the present location and rebuilt. Many of the early round borings for the trunnels, or pins, have been unused and newer borings now contain the wooden pins that fasten the frame together. To emphasize another ancient landmark, a reproduction of the film is printed among the illustrations.



THE SECOND MEETINGHOUSE ON WARD HILL
THE BELFRY WAS ERECTED UPON THIS PORCH.

In the late fall of 1788 the new meetinghouse was opened for services on Sunday. The walls had been boarded, roof covered and some temporary seating provided. From records that describe the building, the illustration seems to represent the exterior appearance. Expert carpenters were often employed to frame the trusses for the roof of a building of this size since no supports were possible within the interior and the roof timbers held the walls in place by the pressure of their weight. Mr.

Clark believed that Timothy Palmer, most famous carpenter from Newburyport, Massachusetts may have accomplished this work, judging his conjecture from later structures in this vicinity that were either copies of Mr. Palmer's frames, or his actual structures. Certainly the meetinghouse was properly framed to withstand the test of time.

The interior was furnished with a pulpit designed as was customary with the desk for the preacher nearly on the level of the gallery. Above this was the canopy near the ceiling, and below was the pew where the deacons sat on the Sabbath and the moderator presided at town meetings.

On the ground floor, forty-six square pews with pine panelled walls were sold to heads of families at a price of ten pounds each. Two relics of this furniture are now a part of the chancel of the present church. The lectern is the base of the actual pulpit that supported the floor of the projection upon which the minister stood while delivering his sermons. The polished pine panel that is set into the front of the present pulpit was salvaged from the splinters of the high pulpit after the meetinghouse was demolished and Mrs. Crawford, who lived on Ward Hill, had saved the old pulpit. One day a man rushed into Webster, Russell's store on Main Street to report that the old pulpit was being cut up for firewood. Mr. Moody Gore hurried up the hill and prevented the destruction of the base of the pulpit and one of the small panels, brought them to the present church and stored them in the attic.

In the gallery that surrounded three sides of the large room, thirty pews were constructed in 1796 at a price of five pounds each. Over the east and the west doorways, porches two stories in height contained the staircases to the galleries. The sunlight poured through the panes of the forty windows to supply the only warmth for the room until 1823 when a stove was permitted.

Finally in 1806, the outside of the walls were covered with clapboards and painted. Fourteen years from the date when the ninety-four voters on the tax list authorized the beginning of this construction, the cost was 574L, 6s, 8d. Of this amount, 428L, 2s, 9d was paid by the sale of the pews.

Five years after, in 1811, the inhabitants subscribed the money to erect a belfry. At that period, the entire structure was completed on the ground, and weathervane attached. With ropes and pulleys, the belfry was raised to the height of the roof of the western porch and fastened with wooden pins to a platform. Unfortunately, this belfry was not properly constructed and in 1815 repairs were necessary. In 1853, the belfry and supporting porch were removed and the materials were made a part of a dwellinghouse.

A subscription paper was again circulated to purchase a bell from the foundry of Paul Revere and Son in Boston. On their stock book the record remains that this bell was number 373, weight 932 pounds, price \$382.27. Nobody remembers the story about what became of this bell when the belfry was demolished. A rumor exists that the metal cracked and was recast as a part of the bell that is now in the belfry of our church, which is dated 1834.

This second meetinghouse was the property of the Town of Plymouth, controlled by the vote of the citizens. Every public assembly gathered within its walls, both on the Sabbath and throughout the week. The selectmen and the minister permitted whatever use was considered proper for the public good.

Among the taxpayers were a group of dissenters who protested their minister's tax, because they did not accept the doctrine that Parson Ward proclaimed and they absented themselves from the services and refused to pay the tax for his salary. When the tax collector attempted to assess their estates, Mr. Abel Webster appealed, with a petition signed by the dis-

senters, at Exeter to the General Court of the Province for relief. Mr. Francis Worcester was then a member of the Council and he advised a compromise. The dissenters agreed to pay the taxes that were assessed until 1780, and "all persons of the Baptist principles" were excused from ministerial taxes in the future.

About 1800, Methodist preachers were zealously spreading their faith in the vicinity of Plymouth. Gradually the number of taxpayers who were excused from paying the tax for the town's minister placed a burden upon the remainder so that necessary action was demanded. Finally, in 1819 the legislature of the State of New Hampshire established the "Toleration Act" which stated: "Each sect or denomination of Christians may associate and form Societies . . . and shall have all of the corporate powers which may be necessary to assess and raise money by taxes upon the polls and ratable estates of the members of such associations & collect and appropriate the same for the purpose of building and repairing houses of public worship & for the support of the ministry." This law provided for legal means to support the denominations.

The Congregational churches immediately organized "Societies." In Plymouth the Congregational Society was incorporated on June 15, 1819. While many men refused to become members of the church and accept its covenant, nevertheless they desired that the church should be maintained and signed their names to become taxable members of the Society of the denomination of their choice.

An arrangement was settled with the selectmen of Plymouth to continue public worship in the meetinghouse on Ward Hill on Sabbath mornings, with a minister who received his salary from the Congregational Society. In year 1819, the membership of the church numbered sixty-five men and women.

Chapter IV

THE PRESENT CHURCH BUILDING

Denominational changes were developing. No longer was the Congregational Society the dominant religious group in Plymouth. The circuit riders had accomplished their aims successfully. To Christians of today the theological dogmas of 1820 are obsolete. Such doctrines as foreordination, predestination, back-sliding, "once grace, always grace" and many others were argued with such vehemence that members of families became estranged, parents forbade their children to marry a person of another sect contrary to their own beliefs, and bitterness between denominations was prevalent.

Again reference to the novel, *Elizabeth Wilson*, written by Mrs. Blair, is made. Mrs. Blair was the daughter of Rev. William Nelson, the first settled Methodist minister in Plymouth village, an educated, friendly man. He retired in 1836 and purchased a farm toward Hebron. He served as a selectman in Plymouth during four terms, a representative in the legislature and delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1850. His gifted daughter married Hon. Henry W. Blair, a lawyer in Plymouth who was representative to Congress and to the United States Senate. She became a member of scientific societies, was State President of the New Hampshire Federation of Women's Clubs in its early years and one of the most influential women in the state. Copies of her novel are found in the public library and are excellent revelations of the spirit of the times.



In September, 1955, the tablet upon the original stone post at the head of the Mayhew Turnpike of 1804 was unveiled by Asquamchumauke Chapter, D.A.R. Standing at the right in the photo are two selectmen, William Driscoll and Harl Pease. On the left by the stone are Mrs. Gustavus U. Stewart and Mrs. Guy E. Speare. In the background are Mrs. Charles E. Moors, Mrs. Harl Pease, Mrs. Roger Hart and other members of the D.A.R. The stone marks the intersection of three highways.

Plymouth was progressing commercially. In the early days of the settlement West Plymouth was the industrial section. The brooks furnished power for saw and grist mills, clay deposits caused brickyards to flourish and a pottery gave the

name "China Street" to the old road that connects route 25 with 3A today. A corduroy road, now Main Street, extended northward through Franconia Notch in 1805 where the "Old Man" was then discovered. The first bridge over the Baker River was built in 1786 and another over the Pemigewasset River replaced the Livermores' ferry in 1797. In 1804 the Mayhew Turnpike was chartered from West Plymouth to Bristol and the Haverhill Turnpike joined it in 1808. The Coos Road to Portsmouth from Haverhill was Highland Street and stage coaches began to travel over this network of highways.

A store was opened on Main Street by Jabez Hatch Weld in 1790 and Moor Russell came to Plymouth from Haverhill and established his business near the site of the present post office in 1798. Soon he was sending the produce of the entire countryside to Portsmouth in wagons drawn by eight horses while trade also began southward to Boston. Thus the trade center of today was determined at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Most important for our topic, the Methodist denomination so increased its membership that a brick church building was erected in West Plymouth in 1830, and a wooden building on Main Street in 1833. Their church rolls equalled or exceeded the list of members in the Congregational Church. The times demanded action. The meetinghouse on Ward Hill needed repairs, but the Congregational Society refused to share in the expense. Politics were beginning to bring into the town meetings discussions of a nature that seemed to desecrate the house on week days while new sects sought to occupy it on Sabbath afternoons.

The Society debated a new building of its own, but many people would not consent to abandon the meetinghouse where they had worshiped since childhood. In crises a leader appears, and in 1830 Rev. George Punchard was installed—a young, inspiring preacher who infused a religious awakening. The meet-

inghouse was crowded during three successive days, people coming from surrounding communities to attend this revival.

Suddenly, without a vote of the Society, three men, John Rogers, William W. Russell and Noah Cummings, assumed financial responsibility for a new building near Main Street. Rev. Punchard secured plans at a cost of \$50.00. The logs for the frame were cut across the river in Holderness, drawn to the site of the present O'Brien's store and there adzed to the required lengths.

The site was purchased from Grafton County with the consent of Mr. William Webster, son of Col. David Webster, who inherited the property of his father that consisted of the land now the center of the village, the one hundred acre lot that Col. David drew in Hollis. William Webster sold the section where the court house and the church are standing to Grafton County with a reservation in the deed that no part of this could be sold without his consent. The restriction in the deed to the Society is worthy to be noted: "That the house shall be forever appropriated to the worship of God by Christians of the Congregational Trinitarian order and that no portion of said pew holders shall have the right of appropriating said meetinghouse any portion of the time for public worship by any other order or denomination of Christians."

The frame was raised on July 4, 1836, the dedication was held in the last week in December, and the first regular service was held on January 1, 1837. The meetinghouse on Ward Hill continued to be used by the town. Frequently repairs became necessary until the building became a storehouse and was finally sold at auction in 1865. Twelve years later the building was torn down and the frame was set up for a saw mill near the falls on Beebe River in Campton. The mill burned in 1884.

Christmas Day in 1836 was a sad one for many old residents when Rev. George Punchard conducted the "leave tak-

ing” service in the Ward Hill Meetinghouse. For the text of his sermon he chose Exodus 25: 15, “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence,” possibly with the intention of reconciling the regrets of those who were reluctant to abandon their childhood sanctuary.

No longer did the inhabitants walk barefooted to meeting as in the beginning of the services in the log meetinghouse. On New Year’s Day, no doubt snow covered the landscape. Before nine o’clock in the morning families from the farms were starting with their ox-teams, the usual conveyance, and by ten were arriving at the door of the church. Down from Ward Hill rode the Isaac and Arthur Wards, the William and Nathaniel Drapers, and King George and his five sons. Over Thurlow Hill came the family of Noah Cummings, a sponsor of the new building. From their homes in the village walked the households of Moor and William Russell, also sponsors; William Webster, the tavern keeper; Dr. John Rogers and his two sons, Nathaniel Peabody, famous abolitionist, and John Jr. the third sponsor; Deacon Alpha McQuesten, tanner and pioneer glove manufacturer; and William Green, banker and church treasurer, also many others whose names are no longer heard in the town.

The village was small with only three streets: Webster, Main and the “Rumney Road,” now Highland Street. Since 1825 important sites had been occupied. The covered bridge, “Pont Fayette”; the Rogers, later known as the Sargent residence, on Main Street and Moor Russell’s brick mansion were of that year, also the new court house. The village common was then a steep, gravel bank without the shade of an elm. Moor Russell built his brick store in 1825, razed for the present post office building. Several horse sheds occupied the site of the former bank, now the Rural Electrical Office Building. Next was the new Congregational Church, the Court House of Graf-



THE CHURCH, COURT HOUSE, AND NEW HOLMES ACADEMY IN 1851. TO THE LEFT OF THE CHURCH IS "SQUIRE" LEVERETT'S LAW OFFICE AND ABOVE IT THE ROOF OF THE FIRST CHAPEL MAY BE SEEN. NOTE THE "DISH COVER" TOP ABOVE THE BELFRY OF THE CHURCH

ton County and the new Plymouth Holmes Academy, the last two with pillared porticoes, and the three belfries made an imposing array. The grass grew to the main street where a line of hitching posts were set along the margin.

The walls, roof and belfry, except the cupola, of the church were as today and the same window frames with many panes of glass. Entering the vestibule, the congregation found an arrangement exactly opposite to the old meetinghouse. Mr. Punchard had purchased a design according to the modern plans of the famous architect, Charles Bulfinch, who turned the seating arrangement and aisles lengthwise of the auditorium and placed the pulpit against the narrow north wall. Along either side of the two aisles were sixteen pews, each with a door that fastened by a brass button. In the two front corners were several "wing" pews on either side of the box-like pulpit that was raised on a platform, yet much lower than at the Ward Hill meetinghouse.

At the ends of the aisles, below the pulpit, were cast iron box stoves, the stove pipes entering a chimney on either side of the pulpit, against the wall. The one person who realized the heat of the wood fires was the minister and he actually sweated as the temperature increased.

Two concessions to former customs are still here: the raised platforms upon which the wall pews rest and the gallery that is over the vestibule, then extended above the four rear pews. The front seats in the gallery were reserved for the choir; persons who preferred balcony pews, sat in the rear. Whether the custom was established that the audience faced the choir during the singing is not remembered. A tale is related that when the organ and choir were moved to the front of the room, several persons insisted upon turning to face the balcony as was their custom and change was impossible for them.

Missing were a carpet, cushions, a musical instrument, and

lights. In the attic of Mrs. Harl Pease is stored a bass viol that was presented to the church in 1838. Kerosene was not considered a safe illuminating fluid until 1849.

After the morning sermon, we can imagine that maple fuel was added to the fires and women and children gathered around the stoves to open their wooden lunch boxes while they enjoyed the exchange of village and family news. The men hastily finished their snacks and repaired to the tavern for discussions of the points in the sermon and politics. One wonders what the housewives packed for those Sunday lunches. Doubtless slices of homegrown wheat or corn bread, with ham, cheese, molasses or maple sugar cakes and jugs of milk, the latter served in the brown mugs that were fashioned in the potteries in West Plymouth. The noon hour was soon over and again the audience assembled for the afternoon sermon. How impossible for the youth of today to comprehend the slow motion of the oxen as they turned homeward after the Sabbath services of a century and a quarter ago.

Unfortunately harmony did not reign. Within three months the sponsors began to express their disappointment when the sale of the pews did not meet their expectations, the beginning of a controversy that was not settled until 1851, then without discharging entirely the obligations for the investment by the three sponsors.

Also, a minority petitioned the Society to sanction Sabbath services in the Ward Hill meetinghouse one third of the time, a proposition that was voted down. Then a most critical problem confronted the wardens. To review our United States history, the Mexican War was fought in 1836 over the claims of Texas. With this territory ceded to the United States, its admission to the Union was sought as a slave state.

In Plymouth lived Nathaniel Peabody Rogers, a respected

citizen and lawyer, and active supporter of anti-slavery. He invited William Lloyd Garrison to visit in his home and requested that Mr. Garrison be permitted to lecture in the church. Violently opposed to admitting Texas, Mr. Garrison advocated secession of the northern states from the Union. While the attitude of the wardens and the minister was in agreement with anti-slavery sentiments, they were not ready to accept the views of Mr. Garrison.

In New Hampshire, slavery was legal. Col. David Webster paid sixty pounds for two negro slaves, Cisco and Dinah, who served their master in his tavern and were lying beside him in Trinity Cemetery. Other slaves had been owned in the town. The wardens decided that Mr. Garrison should not lecture in their church. When he arrived, one day in March, he spoke in a grove in Holderness about his anti-slavery principles. So much bitterness was aroused that annually a committee was appointed to determine on what occasions the church should or should not be opened.

These situations proved detrimental to the health of Rev. Punchard. He was ordained here at the age of twenty-four years, and by the inspirations of his sermons the membership of the church increased constantly. He organized the first Sunday School. In the community his activities included his appointment as agent to collect funds that rebuilt Holmes Academy building and two new dormitories. One of the latter is now the east section of the Pemigewasset Hotel, the other the home of Mrs. Ernest L. Silver, formerly the Leverett residence. In 1842, Mr. Punchard's voice failed and he was obliged to retire from the ministry after fourteen years of successful pastorate.

Changing customs in the form of worship and the appointments in the building kept pace with the times. The years 1868, 1893-95, and 1928 saw extensive renovations.

The beginning of changes was in the heating arrangements.

The two stoves below the pulpit were of little comfort to the congregation and considerable discomfort to the preacher above them. Soon they were placed in the rear of the room with openings cut through the partition into the vestibule so the doors of the stoves opened into the vestibule for fuel replenishment, convenient for the janitor but hazardous for fire. Next the stoves stood within the audience room. Meanwhile the stove pipes extended above the aisles, with wood smoke and dripping creosote exuding all the way to the chimneys beside the pulpit, until in 1893 the building was elevated, a basement excavated and two furnaces were installed there. Again in 1951 the heating system was modernized with oil replacing the coal.

After the heating problems, in 1849 the audience room was lighted by kerosene lamps. Chandeliers were hung in 1868 and lamps in brackets along the walls, and in 1894 electricity was introduced.

The musical instruments changed with the years. After the bass viol was presented in 1838, a so-called seraphine, in reality a reed organ with hand operated bellows, was purchased. The Women's Society promoted the purchase of a second hand but excellent pipe organ in 1872. This called for an alcove that was extended behind and above the pulpit with space for the choir behind an ornamental parapet.

Carpets were paid from the treasury of the Women's Society in 1868, 1882 and 1895. The renovations of 1868 included the present gothic windows, a new pulpit, the doors of the pews removed and black walnut arms added. The seats of the pews were widened and cushions provided.

Among the records of the church is a small account book dated 1868, September 14th. The first page reads: "A committee consisting of Wm. W. Russell, Jr., Joseph A. Dodge, Arthur Ward, James McQuesten & Washington George chosen by a vote of the Pew Holders in the Congregational Meetinghouse in

Plymouth Village, N. H. met and made a valuation of all the Pews in said House and have assessed a Tax on said Pews according to their relative value to raise the sum of One thousand dollars to make repairs and alterations on said House of which the foregoing is the valuation and Tax by them assessed." Seventy-four pews were valued and assessed and all taxes were paid within three months. This account proves that the pew holders were legally taxed for their property.

Again in 1881 taxes were assessed upon the pew holders, but their number decreased to only forty persons. William Russell had acquired four pews, and the Congregational Society held five. In 1893, the record shows that at the last assessment upon owners of pews, the Society held eleven, Mrs. William Russell owned ten and Plummer Fox paid on three pews. At this time, the pew holders were requested to grant permission for alterations to the church. Subscriptions from generous persons raised \$16,000 to erect the present chapel, to cover the walls and ceiling of the auditorium with metal plates, repair the tower and construct the present dome top.

The original so-called "dish-cover" design of the cupola was frequently seen at the period that our church was erected; the metal form was convenient to install. The same plan may be found on the Baptist Church in Rumney which was constructed in 1837.

According to a story that was told to the writer at least twenty-five years ago, when the renovations of 1893 were in process, a summer resident who had traveled in Europe suggested that the tower be made higher and surmounted by a dome. As soon as she learned that her desires were approved, the generous lady paid for the entire construction. To her the domes that cover the sanctuaries of the cathedrals of Italy represented the vault of the heavens which in architecture typifies immortality or infinity.



THE BELFRY OF 1893

If a person has not paused to admire the Roman arches on the panels of the octagon that supports the dome, a few minutes of study will prove that Mr. H. W. Sweetzer of Campton was a master craftsman. Without doubt he copied the design from a carpenter's pattern book and skillfully fastened the many pieces of the curved framing of the arches and of the mouldings so firmly that this specimen of the builder's art has withstood the stormy winds that prevail in Plymouth, over the space of sixty years.

Certainly the tower of our church is an unusual pattern, not duplicated within the State.

Thirty-five years passed by, when the gift of \$1000 toward a new pipe organ aroused enthusiasm, especially from Mr. John Keniston, long the talented organist and Mrs. Harl Pease, then organist for the Methodist Church. Most actively joining in the organ project was the pastor, Rev. Frederick H. von der Sump whom illness compelled to resign soon after the instrument was installed in 1929. After \$10,000 had been pledged to the organ fund, Mr. George G. Clark offered to modernize the chancel. Because many interesting facts are not on record and may be forgotten, certain items for this 1928 renovation are mentioned in some detail.

A committee consisting of Mr. Clark, Mr. and Mrs. Harl Pease, Mrs. George R. Foster, Mr. Moody Gore, Mr. Keniston and Mr. Robert G. Wakefield traveled in the vicinity of Boston to inspect designs of up-to-date church interiors at the expense of Mr. Clark.

When the committee had determined their plans, copied largely from a chancel at Wellesley, Massachusetts, Mr. Clark sent Struther Burr, a famous architect to Sandown, New Hampshire to take measurements of the desk of the colonial pulpit of 1774. The design of the pulpit in the present chancel follows the lines of that ancient desk. The lectern and dark pine



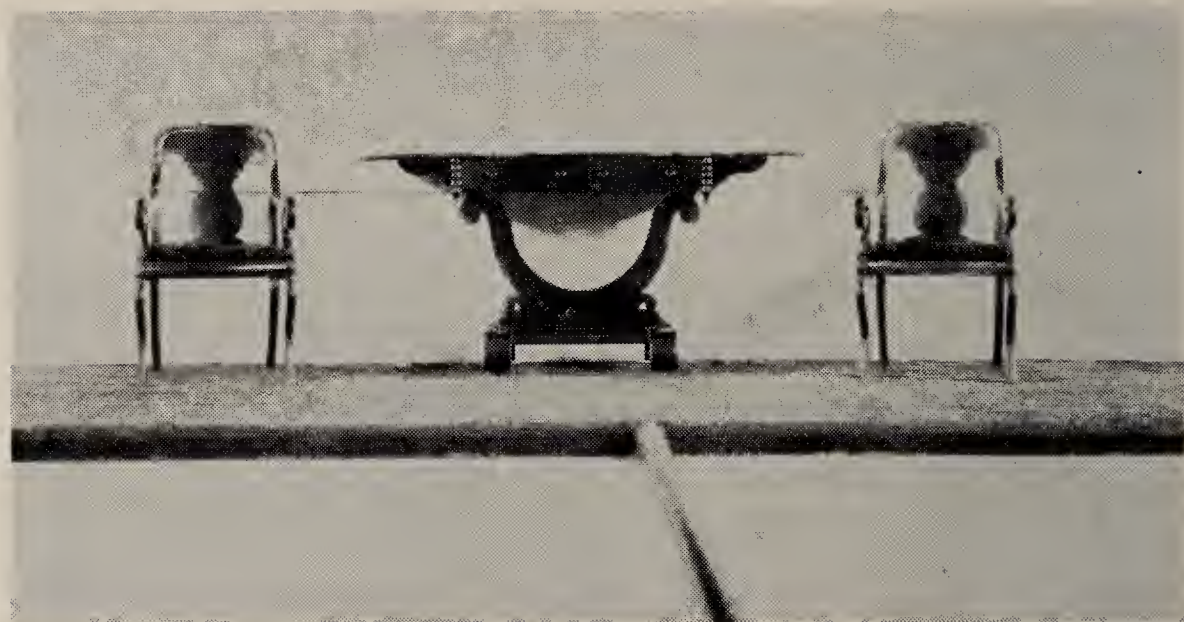
THE SANDOWN PULPIT OF 1774

panel in the front of the pulpit have been mentioned in the previous chapter. Mr. Gore recalled the relic that he had stored in the attic of the church and, since this coincided with the period of 1774, its appropriate use was recognized.



THE LECTERN IN THE PRESENT CHANCEL, ONCE THE BASE OF THE PULPIT OF THE WARD HILL MEETINGHOUSE IN 1788.

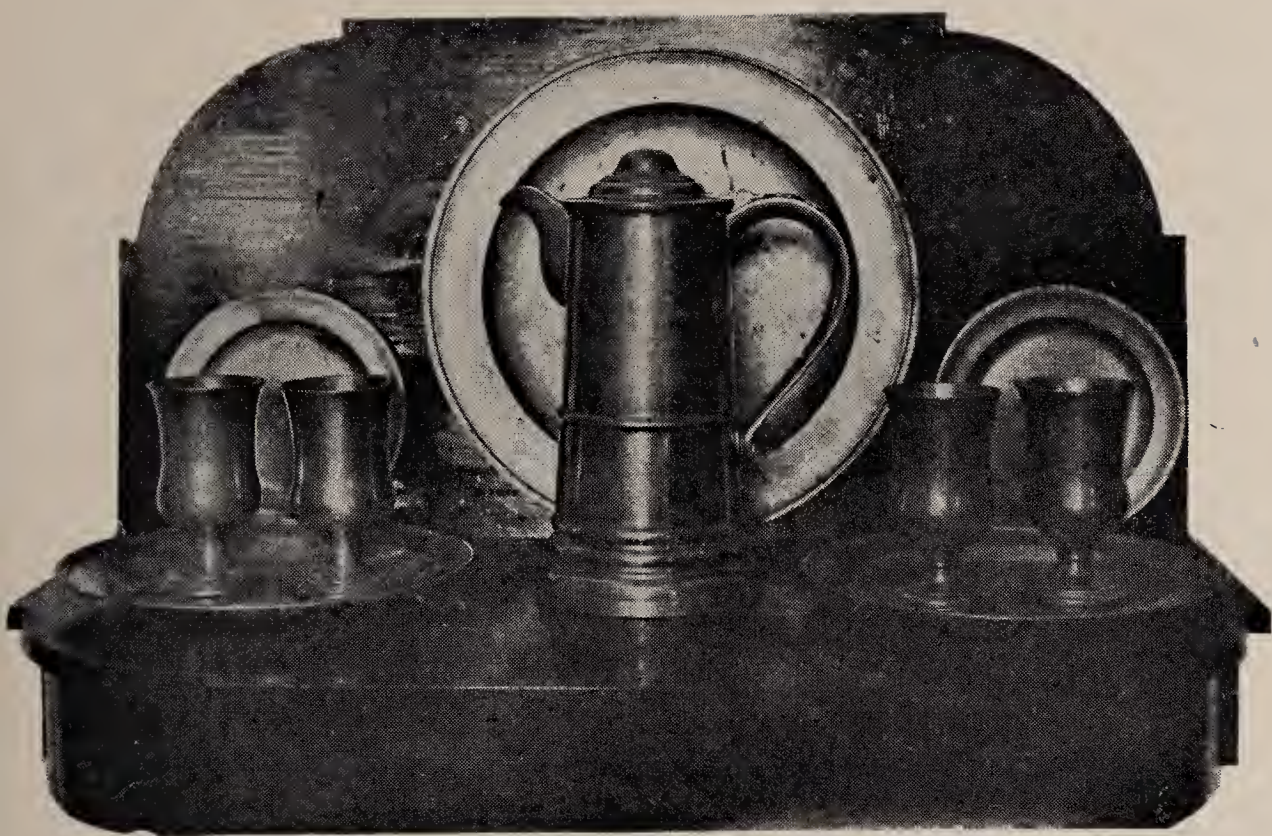
The firm of decorators, noted for their work in the national cathedral at Washington, D. C., Irving and Casson of Boston, were employed by Mr. Clark, Mr. Irving being his classmate at Dartmouth '99. The mirror window, hangings, and especially the coloring on the walls were by these specialists. The electroliers were the final addition to this semi-colonial interior.



THE LYRE TABLE AND COLONIAL CHAIRS FROM THE
WARD HILL MEETINGHOUSE

Last of all, what to place in the rear of the chancel to complete the pattern was the problem. Mr. Irving saw the Lyre table for the solution. About 1800, this piece was manufactured by a famous cabinet maker at the price of two pounds sterling for the communion table on Ward Hill. Mr. Irving assured Mr. Clark that his firm had recently copied a Lyre table at an expense of \$1500 and that our table was then estimated to be worth at least \$1200. The four chairs that stand beside this table are either from the Ward Hill meetinghouse or were the first pulpit furniture of the present church, probably the first idea, since this same design is found at the Congregational Church in Exeter, New Hampshire which was erected in 1798.

The latest addition to the priceless possessions of the church is the cabinet presented by Mr. Glenn H. Youngman to display the two communion sets. The pewter plates, goblets and pitcher are the originals which were used until about 1868. The silver set was replaced 25 years ago when individual glasses were introduced.



THE ORIGINAL PEWTER COMMUNION SET FROM THE
WARD HILL MEETINGHOUSE

Another valuable possession is the bell that calls us to worship. "Cast by George H. Holbrook, East Medway, 1834." This is the trademark that is embossed around the barrel, an inscription of intrinsic worth, for its founder was an apprentice in Boston about 1782 in the foundry of Paul Revere, famous gold, silver and copper smith as well as Revolutionary patriot.

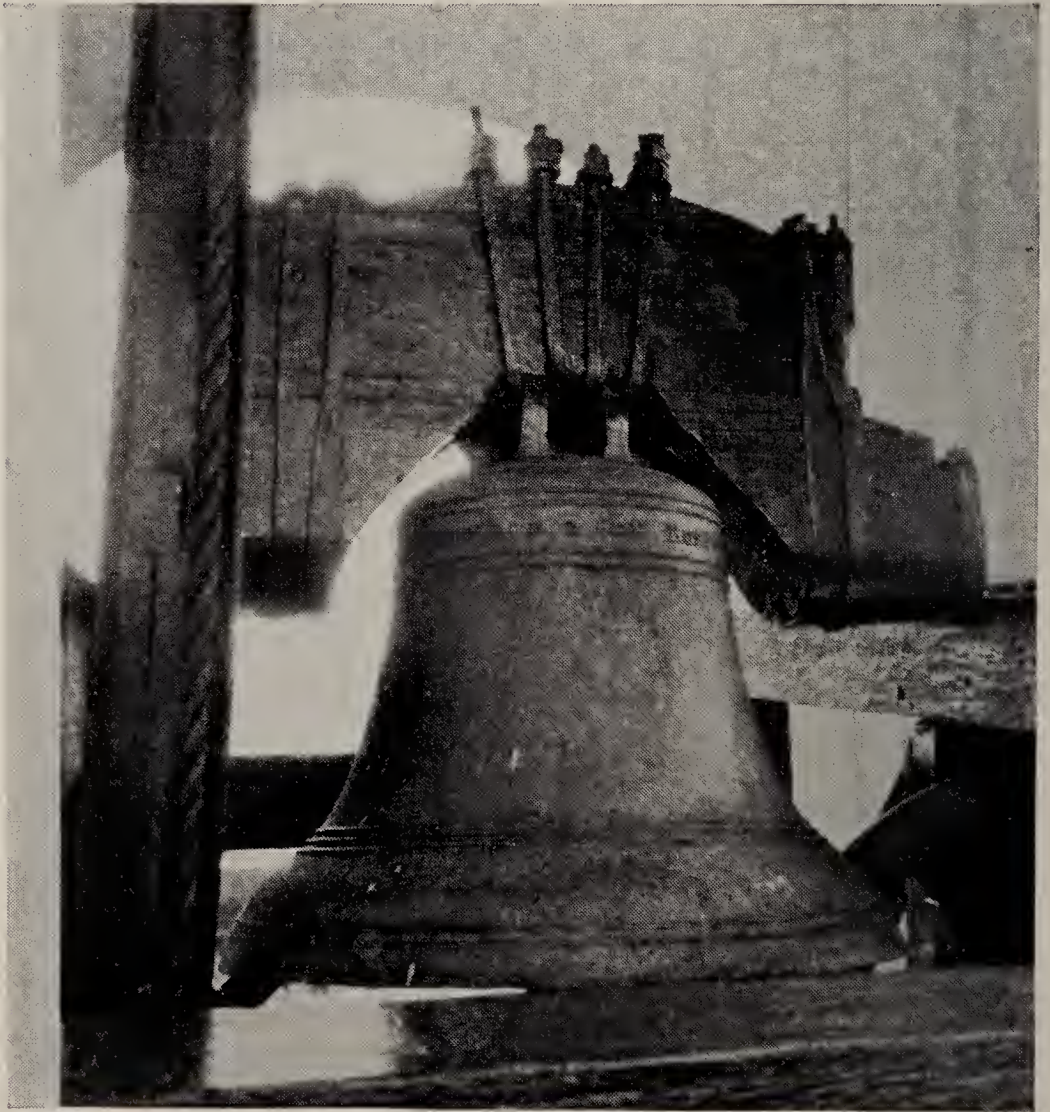
Mr. Holbrook was born in Wrentham, Massachusetts in 1767. He was sent to Paul Revere to be trained for a machinist and clockmaker, but he learned to cast bells.

When the bell cracked in the steeple of the church where Paul attended, he attempted to recast the metal rather than send it to England. Skilled as he was with metals, he did not know the art of making molds for bells and the tone of his first bell was exceedingly sharp. He sent his son, Joseph, abroad to

study bells and he returned with a knowledge of both English and French models.

Young Holbrook preferred the French bells and in 1797 he set up a foundry in Brookfield, Massachusetts in company with Paul Revere, 3rd, where they cast bells until Paul died in 1813. Suddenly financial misfortune broke the health of Mr. Holbrook and the following three years he lived on a farm in Meredith, N. H.

In 1816, he returned to East Medway, Massachusetts and



A PAUL REVERE AND SONS BELL

established a company that, with his son and grandson, continued to cast bells until 1880. It would be a satisfaction to discover if the three men who erected our church in 1836 had learned about Mr. Holbrook while he lived in Meredith, but to date no memory about his farm has been discovered.

As the vibrations of a perfect bell spin around the barrel, they play a complete octave from the sound bow where the clapper strikes, up to the top of the bell. Mr. Holbrook manufactured clocks and perfect bells.

Unfortunately, the rim of our bell has been chipped which stops many of the vibrations of its "hum notes" as the sounds that ring out into the air are called, and the sweetness of its tone is not broadcast too widely.

If the tongue or clapper is firmly fastened, this fine old bell will call to worship during another century and ring out the memory of Paul Revere and his famous apprentice above our village on Sabbath mornings for our children's children.

In this connection, it may not be amiss to mention that in the belfry of the Grafton County Court House is a Henry M. Hooper & Company bell, cast in 1849, and in the tower of Rounds Hall, Plymouth Teachers College, is a bell that was "Cast by William Blake & Co., formerly H. N. Hooper & Co. Boston, Mass. 1874." All three of these bells were cast by apprentices of Paul Revere.

Chapter V

THE ANCIENT TRUNK

In the kindly custody, characteristic of the Directors of the Pemigewasset Bank, a trunk belonging to our church has been sheltered within the safety of those walls for many years. If the bill "for trunk, \$1.50" tells its date of purchase, a slip of paper within the trunk, then its age is 106 years. When the new bank building was planned, no space for such relics was provided, and the trunk was returned to the Church Committee.

After some deliberation over this heirloom, the Committee requested Mrs. George R. Foster and Mrs. Guy E. Speare to thoroughly examine the contents, preserve whatever seemed of historical value, and destroy anything that was no longer worth saving. The trunk was deposited in Mrs. Foster's diningroom during the winter of 1955. Hours of pleasure developed while we pored through record books and packages of papers, all thick with dust of years.

Tied in packages or enclosed in envelopes, were found hundreds of financial papers, long since valueless: bills for lumber and nails, receipted and paid, which built the first chapel in 1850; bills for fuel and kerosene in twelve gallon cans, consumed and paid for, and many small items, all faded, dusty and useless. With the exception of a few samples for memory's sake, these were destroyed.

Especially important were copies of deeds for the site of the church, yet these proved of small legal value because measure-

ments of the boundaries began at the point where a guidepost stood "at the junction of the Rumney and Campton Roads," a forgotten landmark which was the established spot from which the surveyors measured their lines, long since beyond recall. In the sketch of the career of William Webster that is printed in the History of Plymouth, the statement appears that Mr. Webster "Gave the lot" upon which our church stands, but no proof of such generosity is found in the deeds.

The most ancient relic that was read is the record book of church meetings beginning in 1797. Here are revelations of the code of conduct that was prescribed for members of the church. Still legible, these pages record meetings that resemble trials by courts. Grievances between members were presented and, if proved, the penalty was denial of the rite of Communion until pardon was granted after the guilty person manifested true repentance by confession of his sin. The reader comprehends the often expressed idea that a person was "not good enough to belong to the church" although everybody belonged to the congregation.

A set of five volumes on the History of Congregationalism by Rev. George Punchard, pastor when our church was erected, would be informative reading were the fine print easier on the eyes. Whether another complete set of these volumes is in existence today is not known in Plymouth, and inquiry at the New Hampshire Historical Library in Concord revealed that only the first two volumes are contained on their shelves.

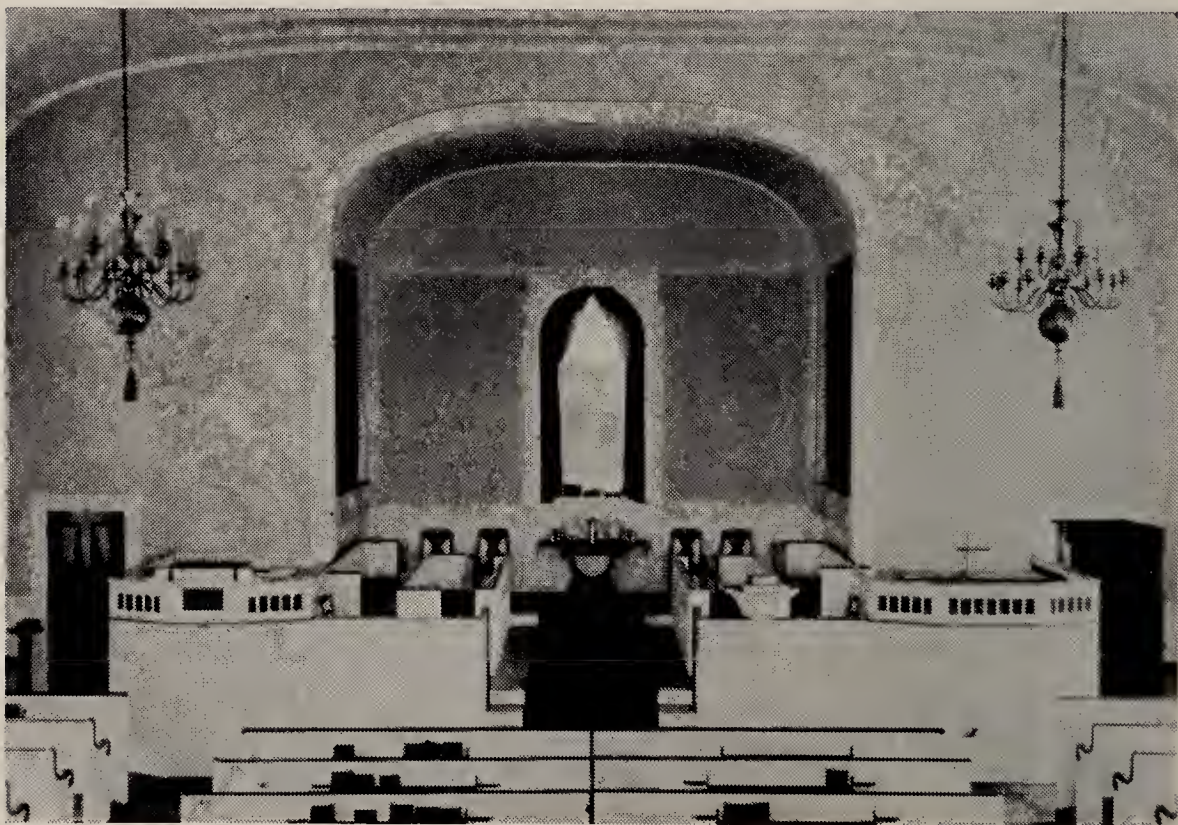
The most surprising discovery is an album containing photographs of prominent pew owners, including Deacon William W. Russell and his contemporaries. Also of more recent date is the Scrap Book that was compiled by Miss Nettie Armstrong, clerk of the church for many years. Here are clippings and photographs of Parson Ward and his successors that were

copied by Mr. Clark at the Centennial celebration in 1936. The annals of the Society are also preserved.

Should a History of Plymouth be written again, most authentic data might be gleaned from the records of the Sunday School during the years that Mr. John Keniston served as Superintendent. Cards for attendance of pupils bear names and addresses of scores of youths and their parents who resided in Plymouth many years ago.

Several copies of Church Manuals, dated 1892, are filled with a brief history of the church, a copy of the Covenant, Principles and Rules, rituals, and a list of all members and officers beginning with 1800, stating the date when admitted and of removal from town or by death.

These priceless books have been arranged within a metal safe, presented by Mrs. George H. Bowles, that stands in the pastor's study in the chapel, and the trunk may be seen in the chapel hall.



THE CHANCEL OF 1926

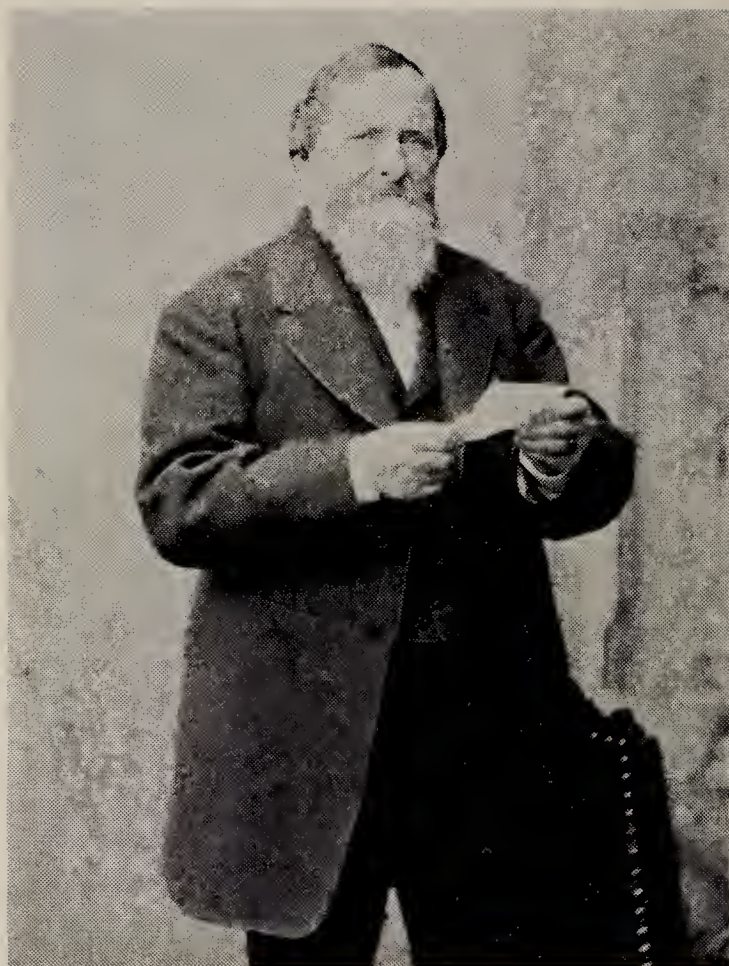
Chapter VI

THE STORY OF THE PEWS

Most gratifying to discover in the old trunk is a sheet of faded paper, dated 1836 and signed in the smallest script by Wm. W. Russell. Upon this he drew a plan of the pews with the names of customers and the prices that they paid. Since the first service in our church was on New Year's Day, 1837, evidently this sheet is a record of sales during the year that the building was under construction.

The four front pews priced at \$55, the next row at \$65, next at \$75 and the three rows in back of these were \$80 each. The prices gradually decreased by five dollars until the rear pews were \$30.

Mr. Russell's plan disclosed that he owned eleven pews, Mr. John Rogers owned ten and Mr. Noah Cummings owned three. Lawyer Wm. Coombs Thompson generously purchased six and a half pews, marked "Pd." Mr. Leonard George, successful carpenter and builder, bought five and a half, marked "Certificate given." Nathaniel P. Rogers owned three pews. Mr. Joseph Reed immediately paid \$70 for pew No. 41 and his descendants occupy it in 1957, the only such record in the list. Mr. Russell Cox of Holderness also paid \$80 for No. 44. The greater number of customers began their payments with four or five dollars. Mr. Arthur Livermore paid \$20 toward the price of \$70 for the wing pew that remains at the right side of the organ's console, against the wall.



DEACON WILLIAM WALLACE RUSSELL
1801—1872

The photographs of Mr. and Mrs. William Wallace Russell were found in the old trunk. Mr. Russell was a successful merchant in the business that his father, Moor Russell, established. He was one of the three sponsors who erected the church, a trustee of Holmes Academy, a friend of the needy, a liberal patron of every worthy cause and respected for his integrity and unblemished character. Scores of financial papers displayed his signature and records of his service on important committees proved that his devotion to the church was outstanding.

Capt. David Webster, Stephen Morse, James Miller, Capt. Daniel Pillsbury, William Green, cashier of the bank, each purchased two pews, all marked, "Pd." Thus the sale of the pews by the three sponsors did not immediately reimburse them, especially since the list shows that many of the highest priced remained unsold. Also the list seems to indicate that Mr. Cummings was a better salesman than the other two sponsors, or he did not invest the same amount in the building. In all, thirty men purchased pews in 1836.

A later chart giving the names of successive owners was found in the trunk. First mentioned is the original purchaser, then the owner in 1868, and later names without giving dates. Also stated were the number of visitors whom the ushers were allowed to seat in many pews, because these were private property. Unless permission was given, no one would enter the door of a pew except by invitation of the owner exactly as one would pass through the doorway of a home.

THE PEWS ALONG THE NORTH WALL

As the story of the pews is told, this order will be maintained. The numbers begin at the rear on the right side of the north aisle.

Pews No. 1, 2, and 3 were purchased by Lawyer Thompson. No. 1 was sold to Mrs. Benjamin Ward and lastly to Mrs. David A. Webber. Here is an interesting point: many of the names of owners are charted on the distaff side of the family as was No. 1. Until late in life the Webbers lived in Campton. That seat against the wall could not have been comfortable. One wonders if Mrs. Webber preferred it because she might be late if she drove from Campton.

Pew No. 2 belonged to Mr. Thompson, then the Society, and lastly John Martin, the great-grandfather of our treasurer and banker, Mr. Preston Martin. This John was born in Spring-

field, moved to Bridgewater, then to Plymouth where he purchased the Col. John Fenton farm, of Tory fame, whose reputation reveals that in 1775 a tory was no more tolerated in Plymouth than an avowed communist would be today. This "tory land" is still possessed by the Martin Family, near the line of Bridgewater and Plymouth.

No. 3 belonged to Mr. Thompson, and Alvah McQuesten Merrill. The Merrill Family were wealthy pioneers of Newbury, Massachusetts. Jacob established the name on Beech Hill. His son, also named Jacob, was one of the skilled carpenters who erected the Ward Hill meetinghouse. His son, David, played the bass viol in the church services, possibly the instrument that reposes in Mrs. Pease's attic. Great-grandson Alvah was a carpenter who later moved to Fitzwilliam. Plummer Fox, the merchant, purchased this pew as he did several others at the price of \$25, to quote Mrs. Pease, his daughter.

Pew No. 4 was sold by Mr. Russell to Mrs. Enoch Merrill. Her son Freeman was a soldier in the Civil War. He inherited this pew. Lastly Alfred Cook, a civil engineer and deacon after 1893, was the owner. He had a family of seven children, among them Mrs. Flora Chase, a deaconess and treasurer of various church organizations, actively serving both church and town in 1957.

Mrs. Susan Russell, the wife of William W., claimed No. 5. Then it belonged to the postmaster, Mr. Walter D. Blaisdell, and finally to Frank Webster Russell, prominent merchant and generous contributor to church finances. Elderly persons still recall that Mr. Russell, followed by his wife and six children, marched down the aisle regularly on the Sabbath Day. He was a graduate of West Point Academy, accepted military positions, and many offices in the town. His children became distinguished citizens. His wife, Louise Webster Hall, was the daughter of a long line of deacons.

Dr. Samuel Long, an eminent physician in Plymouth for twenty-five years, was the original owner of No. 6 and later his daughter Mary owned it. The Pemigewasset House permitted the usher to seat three persons in 1881 in this pew, evidently reserving space for patrons of the hotel.

On the original chart of 1836, pew No. 7 is marked "sold, \$60." Lucius M. Howe purchased it from the Society and his daughter, Mrs. Davis B. Keniston, inherited it. The final owner is listed as Miss Maria Burns and in pencil beneath her name is Dr. R. Burns who was a physician and politician who served two terms in the Congress of the U. S. A.

Arthur Livermore Webster paid \$65 for pew No. 8 in 1836. He was sheriff of Grafton County, and removed to Grand Rapids. This pew became the property of Mrs. Samuel C. Webster, wife of the senior member of the firm of merchants, Webster, Russell & Co. Many remember the clever speech and skilled methods of trade that were practiced by "Sam" Webster. His daughter, Winnifred was the last owner of this pew. Deacon Ernest B. Hardy, who was employed when a lad in the Frank Webster Russell store, related this appropriate story that illustrates the reputation for sound business practice that Sam Webster acquired. Two men were discussing the ability of Mr. Webster and one of them boasted that it would be impossible to enter the store and call for an article that was not in stock. When the other man refused to believe this claim, the first made a substantial wager to support his argument. The second man accepted the bet and the two entered the store.

Approaching Mr. Webster, the customer asked to be shown a church pulpit. Without appearing to be suspicious, with the utmost courtesy, Mr. Webster confidently invited the customer to come right this way. Following to a store room, the surprised man found on display a bona fide pulpit for sale.

Smugly pleased, the contender accepted the amount of the

wager, then proudly told the story to the "Cracker Barrel" group around the stove. Mr. Webster explained that he purchased the pulpit among a collection of furniture that he had taken in trade.

Lawyer Thompson originally paid for No. 9, then the Society sold it to Mrs. William C. Leverett and her daughter, Mrs. Francis A. Cushman, became the owner. Mr. William Leverett was an influential lawyer who owned the home of Mrs. Ernest L. Silver at five Summer Street. Originally this house was surrounded by wide lawns that extended to Highland Street, and "Squire" Leverett's office was a small, one story place that occupied the site of the former bank building next to the Congregational Church.

N. P. Rogers, as he was generally spoken of, originally purchased No. 10, then Mrs. Orvilla West, who may have been the wife of a son of Nason West who died in 1808. In 1881, the pew belonged to Mr. John S. Tufts, a druggist who erected the Tufts Block that burned and the new bank now occupies the site. His daughter, Alice Tufts, married one of the clerks, William M. Peppard, who came from Rumney and later purchased the drug store from the Tufts heirs. His father retired from business in Rumney and came to Plymouth where he erected the present "D. A. House," now on the campus of the Teachers College.

No. 11 was sold to Harrison B. Marden by William W. Russell, Jr. about 1881. Mr. Marden was a popular stage driver up the Pemigewasset Valley. He died in 1896 and Mr. George G. Clark purchased this pew.

William W. Russell, Jr. always occupied pew No. 12. He was the son of the builder of our church, a deacon for twenty-four years and an esteemed merchant and citizen.

The name of Col. Cummings is written in pencil below the name of Mr. Russell. Probably this owner was Mr. Charles H.

Cummings, son of Jonathan G. Cummings, choir leader and stage driver between Plymouth and Concord. Col. Cummings acquired wealth in railroads and the coal business. He established a Trust Fund over which Mr. Clark was a trustee for many years.

No. 13 belonged to Mr. Frank W. Russell and the ushers were not allowed to seat persons in this pew, since the Russell Family was too numerous for pew No. 5 and occupied both. Originally this was a John Rogers pew, later the property of Frederick W. A. Robie, in 1881, a public spirited citizen and merchant tailor in town for many years.

No. 14 was purchased from John Rogers by John T. Cutter, a merchant, express agent, post master and hotel keeper. He owned the Union Hotel and the Holmes Academy boarding house which he sold to the Normal School in 1871 for a dormitory. This building was moved to become the east section of the present Pemigewasset Hotel.

In 1868, pew No. 15 was purchased from John Rogers by Joseph Burrows. To him we owe the fountain in the Village Common. He was a Harvard student and successful lawyer in Holderness and Plymouth. His daughter married George Clark, parents of Mr. George G. Clark who presented the Boy Scout Statue to the town of Plymouth, and constructed the drinking cups with a legacy from Mr. Burrows for this purpose.

One day in the nineties, Mr. Chauncey Fellows announced to his wife that now she could feel at home and happy for on that day he had purchased the Burrows Pew. Not the entire family, however, was pleased, because Son Victor did not always arrive before the service had begun and never forgot the embarrassment that his tardy entrance produced as he was obliged to walk almost the length of the aisle to pew 15. In later life this lad was in mercantile positions in Vermont where he married his wife, Mary B. Leslie, and both came to Plymouth

where they became active members of our church and Sunday School.

No. 16 was one of the pews that Deacon William W. Russell possessed and it was free for the ushers to fill.

This is the history of the wall pews on the north aisle. They bear the names of influential families, many of them no longer known in town.

THE WING PEWS

In either front corner were five pews, facing the sides of the pulpit numbered 70-74 on the right and 69-65 on the left. Along the walls, pews 74 and 65 remain as originally placed. As renovations for the pulpit progressed, the other wing pews were removed. Apparently in the beginning these pews were popular, perchance because they were near the stoves. After Arthur Livermore ceased to occupy pew 74, in 1868 Samuel Burns, a lawyer, then Mrs. Ira Coffin and finally Wm. W. Russell owned this pew.

No. 73 bears the name of Capt. David Webster and in 1868, Samuel C. Webster, then the Society.

Pew No. 72 belonged to Mrs. Thomas Clark. About 1840, Thomas Clark purchased the present Clark farm on Route 25. The colonial homestead was erected about 1808 by Col. Samuel Wells. Beyond the garden, at the base of the hill, the original frame house stands, removed when the present house was erected. Mr. Clark had been keeper of the toll gate tavern in West Andover on the 4th N. H. Turnpike. In her autobiography that she dictated to her grandson, Mrs. Clark told about customs in that tavern that included entertainment for Hon. and Mrs. Daniel Webster, driving in their chaise to commencement at Dartmouth College.

Mrs. Clark is remembered for her wise training of her three step-children and her own eight. Without doubt her wing pew was occupied regularly until 1872 when this pew was removed.

Two daughters, Miss Martha and Miss Helen, as they were known in the community, participated in the village life of the Young Ladies Library Association, and the church, and Miss Helen assisted when the History of Plymouth was compiled. Today the Helen Clark Funds are legacies that purchase library books and renovations in the church property. A small girl once said that she wished to become like Miss Helen because she wore a black silk dress and drove a fat black horse.

On the south side of the pulpit, pew No. 69 belonged to William Currier, a farmer who lived on the Lower Intervale. In late life he became totally blind. The Society held the pew finally. William W. Russell held No. 68.

No. 67 was purchased by John Keniston, great-grandfather of the family on Thurlow Street. He came to Plymouth from Campton in 1848 and became a director of the banks. According to the facts that Mrs. Wilhelmina Keniston Harbert explained, the son, Cyrus, disliked the glare of the light from the window that he faced, and he bought the next to the rear pew on the south side, an indication that Cyrus did not enjoy the conspicuous wing pew.

David Hobart, son of the pioneer Peter, moved from Beech Hill to Plymouth in 1811. He purchased Pew 66, but removed to Piermont in 1843. Then Simeon Sanborn and Simeon Moulton each purchased one half of this pew. Both men were born in Sanbornton. The former was a soldier in the War of 1812. He became a deacon of our church until 1876, when he removed to Campton. Joseph Miller Howe was the final owner, a merchant in town until 1885 when he moved to Vermont.

Deacon James Morrison owned Pew 65, and with his ten children, the family should have filled this extra long seat. He was a successful farmer and teamster for Russell & Webster Company. His daughter, Martha, married Charles Hobart, the brother of David who owned pew No. 66.

THE PEWS IN THE CENTRAL BLOCK

The front pew, No. 17, was removed, probably was never sold. No. 18 was one that Mr. N. P. Rogers bought. In 1868, John R. French was the owner, but the pew afterwards belonged to the Society.

Deacon Alvah McQuesten owned pew No. 19 until he moved from town in 1867. The Society sold the pew to Mrs. Moody (Hobart) Page, sister of the Hobarts who sat in the wing pews. Her daughter, Mrs. George Washington Gore, inherited the pew and her son, Moody Page Gore, the preserver of our lectern, and his wife, Effie Kibbey, were faithful attendants and workers in our church until the end of their lives.

William W. Russell sold Pew No. 20 to Giles Merrill, a wheelwright who removed to Rumney, and his heirs sold to Mr. George Punchard Cook, named for the popular pastor, as were a number of babies. Mr. Cook married the eldest daughter of Mrs. Moody Page. He was a deacon until he moved to Rumney to become post master in that town, in 1890.

Samuel Cummings Webster was the original owner of Pew 21, a grandson of Col. David, the pioneer, a graduate of Dartmouth, lawyer, and legislator. He became speaker of the House and an Executive Councilor. He removed to Haverhill and died there. His son, Sam, was the successful merchant in Plymouth. Mrs. Mary E. (Ward) McQuesten next owned this pew. The famous business man, Cyrus Sargent, Sr., came to town in 1875 and purchased from his father-in-law the Nathaniel Rogers homestead, recently razed by the State. Mr. Sargent was an active citizen in both town and state. No. 21 became his property.

John Rogers sold No. 22 to Washington George, eminent citizen in town offices, deacon of the church, and in the business of settling estates. His heirs sold the pew to Dr. George H. Bowles, prominent banker. Mrs. Bowles adds a bit of local color

to our history. She relates about a small, black dog that shadowed their Father Bowles and always accompanied him to church. If on a Sabbath, Father Bowles did not attend the service, then the dog followed Frank Russell and sat quietly in his pew.

Dr. Silas Wright Davis purchased No. 23 from Mr. Russell and occupied it until 1889. Then Mrs. Nathan Weeks' name is inserted on the chart in pencil. Mr. Nathan Weeks was the first president of the Pemigewasset National Bank, followed in this position by his son, Frederick, an honored citizen in this community.

Mr. N. P. Rogers sold Pew 24 to William Gould Hull, a successful business man and town official and one of the historians of Plymouth.

On the original list, "Capt. E. Green" paid \$75 for pew 25. Probably he was Ephraim Green, a blacksmith and inn owner. Another blacksmith from Sanbornton, who was elected deacon in 1878, was the last owner, Jason Clark.

Mr. Clark G. Batchelder bought No. 26 in 1836. About a century ago, Mr. Alexander G. Smythe erected his home on Highland Avenue, opposite the dormitories of the Teachers College. With Mr. Russell, he owned the pew. Mrs. Blanche B. Smith was his daughter. Mr. Davis B. Keniston of Campton entered into partnership with Mr. Moses A. Batchelder in a men's clothing store. No. 26 became his property. Also, Mr. Keniston built his home on Highland Avenue and School Street, now the President's residence for the College, the home of Dr. Harold E. Hyde.

No. 27 belonged to Mr. Russell until after 1868, then the Page Family of Beech Hill purchased it. The name of Samuel T. Page was among the business men of town.

Richard Bartlett, son of an early deacon of our church, although living in Campton, yet he originally purchased No. 28

in 1836. He was foster parent to the boy, Henry W. Blair, after his parents died. Another Beech Hill resident, Hardy Merrill and son Lyman followed Mr. Bartlett, then Mr. Alfred Stanley, who was superintendent of the Fiber Mill at Livermore Falls in 1890. Both Mr. and Mrs. Stanley participated in the church and community life and were missed when they were assigned to the Lincoln business of J. E. Henry & Son.

Pew 29 was one of Noah Cummings' holdings. He sold to George Washington Webster of Campton, followed by Charles A. Webster and finally by Mrs. Martha Shute.

David Merrill, mentioned previously as bass viol player, owned No. 30. He ran a saw mill on the Beech Hill Road. After his wife died, the Society claimed the pew.

The four rear pews, 31, 32, 33, 34, were taken apart in the renovations of 1868 to permit space for movement between the two aisles.

Beginning at the rear of the center block, No. 35 was first paid for by William Green, banker, and later the Society paid the taxes of ten dollars.

The same was true for No. 36 with William and then Frank Russell paying a twelve dollar tax when repairs were necessary and voted by the Society.

The same William Currier who owned the wing pew, No. 69, paid for No. 37. Later the Society sold it to James P. Dustin, who was from Bristol and served in the position of janitor at the Normal School.

Pew 38 was one that Leonard George bought in 1836. Hiram W. Merrill, father of Mrs. Emma Foss, a historically minded member of our church, paid the tax in 1868. He was killed by a train at the railroad station. Then Plummer Fox purchased the pew.

No. 39 has about the same early history. Leonard George, then J. C. Bradbury, probably not in town too long to be re-

membered, then Plummer Fox were the owners. This has been the Foster pew. As long as health permitted, Edwin J. Foster and his wife and Mrs. George Foster were such regular attendants, that their absence indicated serious trouble to one of them. Mr. Foster might be sitting in the choir where his mellow bass voice was enjoyed by the congregation. To see his nephew leading the choir is especially gratifying to the older members. Mr. George Foster was ready to assist on committees and was especially active for the Plymouth hospital. The two wives and daughter Marian were among the reliable workers for every good cause.

Mr. Russell sold No. 40 to James Miller, a saddler by trade who died in 1849 and Joseph Clark of Campton paid the twenty dollar tax in 1868. For many years, this has been called, "The Minister's Pew."

As has been mentioned, No. 41 has the outstanding record. Just previous to the Revolution, Joseph Reed bought a farm on Lower Intervale. His son Joseph and grandson William and great-grandson Henry occupied the homestead and all were active members of the church. The latter purchased the pew in 1836 and two more generations, Deacon Clarence and daughter Louise represent their ancestors in 1957.

No. 42 has a remarkable heritage. Jonathan Cummings originally paid \$75 for this pew. He was an active officer in the town but was especially noted as a surveyor. He made the maps of Plymouth for the Carrigan map of New Hampshire in 1816, and a map of the town to locate the lot of each proprietor.

James McQuesten, a lawyer who lived in the N. P. Rogers residence after Mr. Rogers removed to Concord, paid the twenty dollar tax on this pew in 1868. His daughter married Cyrus Sargent, mentioned in connection with Pew 21. Their daughter, Louise, while on a trip abroad, met and later married the son of the wealthy Rittler Family of Austria. They lived in

a magnificent schloss on an estate where their four sons and a daughter were born. Disaster came when Hitler's army conquered Austria. The estate was occupied by Nazi followers and Mrs. Rittler and her daughter fled for safety to Plymouth while her husband remained on his estate to claim whatever of his property it was possible to retain. Occasionally the daughter returns to occupy a place in this family pew. Mr. John Maynard purchased the pew from Mr. Sargent. During several decades Mr. and Mrs. Maynard were constant attendants on Sabbath mornings and today, Mrs. Edward Maynard continues this family custom regularly.

Col. Frederick A. W. Robie, a tailor, bought Pew 43. He was a member of the Church Committee, the militia, and fire company in the town. His daughter Sally and his heirs always retained possession of this pew.

Russell Cox of Holderness owned No. 44, doubtless one of the Cox Family that was of the orthodox persuasion and did not conform to the Episcopal denomination that Samuel Livermore established across the river. Later, in 1886, David Miller Tenney came from Groton and purchased this pew. He became prominent in town politics and in the Fair Association.

No. 45 was the half pew that Leonard George bought in 1836. Then Charles Hazeltine, a relative of Parson Ward, paid the tax of twenty dollars in 1868. His family resided in the "Emerson House" on Highland Street, erected by Enoch Ward. Mr. Hazeltine was interested in the finances of the church and served on that committee. He was also one of the founders of the Plymouth Fire Company.

The Webster-Russell Company bought Pew 46 where Deacon Sceva Speare may have occupied a place after he accepted a position in the store in 1887. Twelve years after, Mr. Speare became a salesman for Brown, Durrell Company of Boston, wholesale dry goods merchants. He prospered and established

his own stores in Nashua, N. H. and Haverhill, Mass. and became an officer in the Indian Head Bank of Nashua. Mr. Speare did not forget his years and friends in Plymouth. To his generosity, the initial gift of \$50,000 to build the Sceva Speare Memorial Hospital bears credit to his name.

Pews 47 and 48 belonged to the Society until Miss Sally Perkins returned from Boston, before 1868, to care for her aged parents. She purchased one half of No. 47 and paid the tax of four dollars. No memories of Miss Perkins remain yet she leaves a record of filial devotion and loyalty to the church. No. 48 was removed in 1868.

THE PEWS ALONG THE SOUTH WALL

On the south side of the aisle, the front pew, No. 49, was purchased by Capt. Daniel Pillsbury who left town for Camp-ton in 1835 where he ran a saw and grist mill. Next owner was David Hobart, probably the grandson of the original proprietor, Col. David Hobart. When he went to Piermont, Mr. Gilmore Houston bought this pew for \$15, its value on the 1868 tax list. He was a harness maker for sixty years in town, served as selectman, deputy sheriff and was esteemed a "reliable" citizen.

Owner of Pew 50, William Crawford gave his life in the Civil War. David George, the next customer, removed to Wentworth and Mr. Russell bought the pew.

The original price of No. 51 was \$75, paid by Samuel D. George who went to Lowell, Massachusetts, and "Wid" Isaac Ward bought the pew for \$35, but paid a tax of \$14 in 1868. Note that while the valuation decreased the taxes assessed were 40% rate.

Pew 52 preserves the memory of an eminent family. Mr. Moor Russell paid the price of \$80 for this desirable space and held it until his death in 1851. His granddaughter, Mrs. C. W.

Edmunds, inherited it and sold to Nathaniel Draper, a glove manufacturer and merchant. His son Jason F. Draper was one of the founders of The Draper-Maynard Company. Both he and Mrs. Draper were active in the work of the church and constantly occupied this pew. In 1956 their daughter, Mrs. Mary D. Lyman died, the last of this prominent family to be known in Plymouth.

Noah Cummings claimed Pew 53; later his daughter-in-law owned it. Calvin Clark, a farmer in Campton, purchased it in 1874, a different branch from the Clarks on the Rumney Road.

On the 1836 list, for Pew 54 Mr. Russell claimed possession for his brother-in-law, Benjamin Edmunds, a successful merchant until 1842 when he went to Brooklyn, N. Y. James L. Rogers, son of the well known family of physicians, bought this pew. He became transportation manager when the railroad reached Plymouth. Another railroad clerk, Charles W. Whittier and later the clerk of the Pemigewasset House, George W. Morse, were the last owners. Deacon Ernest B. Hardy and Harry Huckins are more recent occupants.

Pew 55 was one of the Leonard George purchases. Arthur Ward, great-grandson of Parson Ward paid the tax in 1868. He was a merchant and glove manufacturer until 1878. Then a famous name appears on the list. Woodbury Fogg Langdon, a construction engineer for the Plymouth Water Works and benefactor to Plymouth for whom Langdon Street is named. William R. Brackett, a railroad executive, was the last occupant.

Mr. George also owned No. 56 and sold to Mrs. Betsey Webster, widow of Walter R. Webster, son of Col. David, the tavern keeper. Their daughter, Louisa A. Hall was the last owner. Miss Nettie M. Armstrong, church clerk and historian, sat close to the wall in this pew for many years.

When the author of this booklet and her husband came to the Normal School they were assigned to Pew 57, the property

of Lawyer Alvin F. Wentworth who did not attend services. The previous owner was Mr. Joseph A. Dodge, general manager of Boston, Concord & Montreal Railroad until 1883. Stephen Morse originally owned both No. 57 and 58. He was a farmer in West Plymouth. Mrs. E. G. Dearborn, widow of Benjamin Dearborn paid the 1868 tax and her son-in-law, Plummer Fox signed for her heirs in 1893. Mr. Fox was a prosperous merchant and his daughter, Mrs. Harl Pease recalls that her father frequently paid \$25 to owners of pews who were in need of ready cash.

Mr. Russell sold Pew 59 to Mrs. Mary Cox Blair. Her husband was a prominent citizen on Lower Intervale, a state senator and judge of probate. Then a hatter, Timothy Eastman, who was in business from 1824 to 1869, owned the pew, another of Mr. Fox's later purchases.

Capt. Daniel Pillsbury, a lumberman in Campton in 1836, paid Mr. Russell for No. 60. Mrs. Lewis S. Hill paid a tax of \$14 on it in 1868, and Mr. Fox again became owner of another pew.

Pew 61 introduces a new name, James R. Bill, who purchased it from Mr. Russell before 1868. Another owner was Thomas F. Glynn who came from Watertown, Mass. to become a glove manufacturer. Finally, Charles A. Cook, oldest brother of Mrs. Flora A. Chase, is listed on the 1893 tax paper. Mr. Cook was a warden of the Society and represented the church in its financial affairs with the town when the Society sold its land for a part of the Village Common, about 1870. Mr. William C. Thompson first owned Pew 62 and later it was the property of the Society.

Noah Cummings in 1836 and Cyrus Keniston in 1868 owned Pew 63. Mr. John Keniston, son of Cyrus, was organist and superintendent of the Sunday School for many years. He was a surveyor for the town and doubtless many of the early

landmarks were known to him that are now lost to the town records.

The rear pew, 64 has the same history as No. 62.

In the 1836 plan, there are eight pews that were probably in the gallery, four on either side of the space reserved for the choir. One of these was owned by Aaron Currier, of Lower Intervale, great-grandfather of Mrs. Charles Bowles. The other seven were listed to John Rogers, Mr. Russell and Mr. Hazeltine. Their prices were \$35 and \$40, the same as rear pews in value.

While this review of the history of the pews may seem uninteresting reading, yet these names reveal the origin of the people who established Plymouth. Either English or Scotch-Irish emigrants were the ancestors of these families who cleared the forests and the boulders to cultivated fields, dragged machinery for saw and grist mills up the valleys, learned the tanning process for the Plymouth Buck Gloves, founded an academy for higher learning, established courts for Grafton County and, most important of all, determined the religious standards in the beginning that have persisted nearly 200 years.

Here is also food for thought. Only two family names, Reed and Martin, remain of the original pew owners. An analysis of the lists of lawyers, physicians, merchants, glove manufacturers, and millers indicates the growth that followed the pioneers who cleared the forests from the farms. Names of men who participated in both state and national legislative offices, also in railroad and mail services prove that the church was the center that influenced the outstanding character of the town of Plymouth.

Chapter VII

WOMEN'S SOCIETIES

To understand the status of women during past centuries, open the Bible to I Corinthians 14:34-35. Property rights for married women were non-existent. Consult the wills of ancestors to read that unless a husband bequeathed to his widow a room in his home and the right to walk across his land and into his barn, his heirs could deny her these privileges. No piece of furniture or even the linens that she spun and wove belonged to a widow. If a legacy was willed to a wife, the husband was the legal custodian of the property of his wife. Her signature was not honored by the courts. A widow did not control her own children. Either the father before his death, or the court, appointed a guardian for each child. Not until the women of New Hampshire in 1911 persuaded the legislature to pass the "Equal Guardianship Bill" did a wife hold legal rights to her own children.

These facts are mentioned to adjust one's thoughts about the religious, legal, and financial position of women before the twentieth century. Membership in churches was permitted, yet the old adage, so often quoted by the late Maude Hardy, prevailed: "Let them keep silence and shet mouth." We doubt if women obeyed, for even the repeated admonitions by St. Paul in his letters proves that women of the early churches expressed their opinions aloud.

Soon after the beginning of the nineteenth century, the lost



MRS. WILLIAM WALLACE RUSSELL
(*Susan Carleton Webster*)

Among the photographs in the Old Trunk was this of Mrs. Russell who was born in Salisbury, N. H. on June 3, 1804 and married on November 9, 1826. She lived in the Russell House on Highland Street and was the mother of seven children. Her name appears on the lists of members of the organizations of the women of the church until her death on September 15, 1875, a representative woman of the period when the church was established in the village in 1836.

souls of non-Christians both at home and abroad became the concern of Protestant denominations. The American Board of Congregationalism was founded at Bradford, Massachusetts, and the Baptist missions began at Williams College. Here was a field in which women began to function. Mrs. George H. Bowles can describe how her grandparents were sent to the South as missionaries from Amherst, New Hampshire.

Within the old trunk were record books of the first missionary society in Plymouth, "The Female Cent Society," organized while the Sabbath services were held in the meetinghouse on Ward Hill, on August 5th, 1830, with the minister's wife, Mrs. George Punchard, as its first president, and a membership of fifty-five women on its rolls. The meeting was held at the home of Mrs. William C. Thompson, who became a church member that year and was elected the first treasurer of the new Society. Her husband was the prominent lawyer in Plymouth.

The constitution is worthy of copying: "We live in an interesting period when Christians have been aroused from the slumbers of ages & are coming to the help of the Lord, and when females, constrained by the love of the Savior, are ministering of their substance and doing what they can to promote His blessed cause. At such a time, with such examples and such motives before us, indifference would be inexcusable.

"It becomes all to come forward and contribute to this glorious cause even if they could give no more than the widow's two mites which is presented with pure motives, will be accepted by our gracious Redeemer. With a view to act more systematically in aiding His cause, and to present to Him our humble offerings, we whose names are subscribed, agree to form a society by the name of the Plymouth Cent Society and to adopt the following Rules or Constitution.

"Each member shall contribute to the rate of one cent a week which shall be paid at the annual meeting.

“2nd. The Society shall meet on the second Tuesday of May annually, at which time the officers shall be chosen, viz a President and Treasurer.

“3rd. It shall be the duty of the President to preside at the meetings and call special meetings when she deems it necessary.

“4th. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to keep a list of members, to receive their assessments and any donations presented to the Society. To keep an account of all monies received and transmit the same to the Treasurer of the New Hampshire Missionary Society unless otherwise appropriated by the Society.

“5th. Each meeting shall be opened and closed with prayer.

“6th. These rules may be altered by a vote of the Society at an annual meeting.”

The last record in the book is dated 1882 with twenty-six names on the roll. On the last pages are lists of the amounts of the annual collections for Home Missions beginning with 1830 and ending with 1865. There are two columns: first the Cent Society with a total of \$1130.03, and the Congregational Collections with \$1891.36. If a little mathematical reckoning is made, one finds that during thirty-three years these women paid their pledges faithfully, since the fifty-two cents per year for sixty-six members amounts to \$1132.56.

These women of 125 years ago were bravely breaking precedents when they pledged their modest penny per week. Without doubt, believe it or not, many of them did not possess that amount of cash. When the annual meeting occurred in May they were obliged to humbly ask for the fifty-two cents from their husbands, unless from the egg money which many bartered for groceries they might accumulate a few cents, or from some other small shopping they might save their pledge. To women of today, these may seem impossible ideas, yet a long memory is not mistaken.

Moreover, the members of the Cent Society evidently did not fear the "shame" according to St. Paul, of speaking for home missions, since their books prove that they must have solicited the \$1891.36 from the Congregation after they were "aroused from the slumber of ages" according to their Constitution's preamble.

Until 1882 the Cent Society continued its work with a membership that decreased to twenty-six in that year. Not too long ago mention of this Society was printed in a religious paper indicating that it is still in existence in some of the churches.

On the cover of one of the record books in the trunk, a Women's Foreign Missionary Society is reported to have organized in 1875 and ended in 1902, which sent to the Women's Foreign Missionary Board the amount of \$902.10. Many women of the present time will recall other missionary meetings which were finally merged into one organization of church women several years ago.

It may be wise to consider, briefly, events that were claiming the attention of citizens other than the denominational divisions in the religious life of Plymouth which included the advancing status of the women of the churches.

Already mention has been made of the visit of the abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, in the home of Nathaniel Peabody Rogers. Also, the poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, frequented this valley to unite his voice in the anti-slavery controversies. For a time, he boarded in the house now owned by Mr. and Mrs. Leon Worthen on the Fair Ground Road which he named, "Under Croft."

Another famous preacher and lecturer was Thomas Starr King, who stopped at the hotel, then recently named the Pemi-gewasset House by its proprietor, Mr. Denison R. Burnham. Rev. King walked up the valley to sit in meditation on the roadside to contemplate the landscape, now known as "The

Starr King View" just south of the West Campton schoolhouse. Beneath the tree on the grounds of the hotel, The Starr King Elm, he sat while writing his book, "The White Hills" published in 1859, just previous to his departure for California where his eloquent addresses became most influential in adding this vast Territory to the list of Free States, and where he died in 1864.

Fugitive slaves had been hidden in various secret chambers, not only in the dark closet in Mr. Rogers' home, but in farm houses along the valleys, one said to have a bricked shelter in the huge chimney for a refuge. The atmosphere was charged with political unrest.

People turned to God for guidance and the custom of mid-week prayer meetings was established by men and women, many of them said "to be able in prayer." The necessity for a smaller room than the church was evident. A subscription paper that was passed among the congregation produced \$600.00 to erect a chapel in 1851 on the lot between the church and the former bank building, belonging to Grafton County, loaned for this purpose and a right of way from Main Street to its door.

As women participated increasingly in the work of the church, they decided upon an innovation. On a Thursday evening, March 11, 1858, a group met in the home of Mrs. John Keniston (great-grandmother of Miss Miriam on Thurlow Street) where the Gulf filling station now is located on South Main Street, to organize The Woman's Social Circle. The sixty-six charter members paid annual dues of twenty-five cents, fifty per cent of the value of their missionary Cent Society's pledge.

Their first concern was the Sunday School. Question Books were purchased for the Bible lessons that were arranged quarterly for the pupils. Then a Sunday School Library was established. Possibly in somebody's attic may be stored copies of the "Elsie Books" or the "Pansy" series that girls enjoyed, and the Rollo travel stories for boys.

By the year 1868, when extensive renovations were accomplished for the church building, the women had discovered their powers. Then the annual fairs, still continued, were originated and earned surprising amounts (some years over one hundred fifty dollars) when the value of a dollar of that period is calculated. Popular lectures were promoted and the various suppers were introduced where everybody ate all that each desired, not "for a dollar," but for a dime.

Perchance the writer may be pardoned if she inserts memories of three quarters of a century of the harvest, oyster, strawberry, maple and baked bean and brown bread suppers, with loaves of pound cake, or spiced, sponge and marble recipes and all varieties of pies covering the tables, so vividly recalled by a minister's daughter.

The largest hall in the village was loaned, without price to the church. Dressed in starched white aprons that covered their voluminous skirts, each apron adorned with an elaborate pattern of knitted lace, the women assembled in the early afternoon, bringing their plates, cups and saucers, cutlery, etc. since such utensils were not then purchased by the Circle. Not the blue or mulberry patterns of their prized Staffordshire porcelains, but iron stone ware, with one half inch thickness, was loaned, the everyday dishes that could withstand even the abuse of a church supper. Long linen tablecloths, ironed to satin smoothness, were also loaned, proudly, many of home spun designs with fringed borders. The iron cook stove was heated with a wood fire and the oven made ready for whatever hot dishes would arrive before the hour of five P. M.

If the main dish was an oyster stew, a tin wash boiler was filled with milk to be slowly heated and at the last minutes before the supper hour, one or two gallons of oysters and several pounds of butter were added, since the word, dieting, was not included in the daily vocabulary.

A bean supper meant that pea and yellow eye beans were baked to please all preferences. Later the red kidney varieties were developed and became the popular demand. In brown pottery bean pots or iron kettles, the steaming beans arrived from the ovens of the neighborhood and loaves of brown bread always accompanied them. After the main dish was consumed, then slices of cakes and all the varieties of pies were sampled while the young men rushed about with pitchers of coffee, tea or milk, until everybody was too filled for utterance.

Then came the washing and sorting of the dishes, a confusing process, and usually several days elapsed before every woman had found her entire property.

Thus the Social Circle earned \$500.00 to purchase the first carpet that the floor had received, and in addition, the chairs and plush for the pulpit and chandeliers and wall bracket lamps for the illumination by kerosene.

Far more ambitious was the undertaking in 1872 when the Social Circle purchased the pipe organ from a church in Fall River, Massachusetts at an expense of \$1050.00 and paid another thousand to provide the alcove for the organ and choir in the rear of the pulpit platform.

Within the old trunk, carefully folded in an envelope, marked: "This paper was presented to the Plymouth Congregational Church by Mr. Dean S. Currier on October 14, 1936" was discovered a most precious relic of the enterprise of the Social Circle. This is a four page newspaper, its title *HELP FOR THE ORGAN*, in inch high letters across the top of the front page. This edition was printed by M. A. Haynes in Lake Village on March 8, 1872. The price was ten cents.

Eleven of the twenty columns are filled with advertisements from far and near. Bankers, merchants for every sort of goods, apothecaries (no druggists), schools, and many individuals patronized the paper. Most appealing is: "W. Z. RIPLEY. We

would be happy to be informed of a sure cure for Rheumatism! Corner of High and Summer Streets, Plymouth." Another states: "I am in favor of good music in Churches, therefore I advertise. Thos. P. Cheny, Ashland." One manufacturer offered BLACK STOCKINGS and underneath he stated, "In all colors." Several inches, printed in Spanish, advertised goods from all parts of the world by "Juan P. Rogers y Ca. Boston, Commercial Commissioners."



THE CHANCEL OF 1872 AND THE ORGAN THAT THE
WOMEN'S SOCIETY PURCHASED.

The remaining columns contain the story about the organ, poems, and brief paragraphs and short stories.

On the fourth page is an article that contains valuable facts about the present library building. This was written in 1872, before readers of today were born, probably by a person who had seen and heard Daniel Webster. The building was then a



THE COURT HOUSE OF 1774

paint shop, dilapidated and dishonored. Four years later it was purchased by Senator Henry W. Blair who moved the frame, at least, to the County site and repaired its walls and roof and presented it to the Young Ladies Library Association for 99 years, beginning in 1876.

A small wood cut illustrates the appearance of the shop at that time. The roof is much higher and more steeply inclined, a chimney stands half way up the front roof above the doorway, and the cupola is missing. In the year of 1774 it is reported that a fireplace was built in the front corner next to the present Court House.

Because the contents of this column is a personal story by a forgotten author, the entire piece is re-printed here.

THE OLD COURT HOUSE

"Few are the relics of antiquity of which Plymouth can boast. These we treasure rather on account of their associations, than for their intrinsic value. The Car of Progress has rolled by both the old Meetinghouse and Old Court House; but at the latter it stops occasionally for repairs.

"Almost a hundred years ago did our fathers gather at the raising of this Temple of Justice, a square, low building with an oddly shaped roof, then located near the center of the village. When it was no longer used for judicial purposes, the district school was held in it; and schoolmasters reigned with birchen scepters, and the children of fifty years ago took with patience doses of Murray's mysterious Grammar, and Morse's Geography, figured with abnormal zeal according to the Rule of Three.

"The present appearance of this building is more suggestive of utility than of the beautiful or the picturesque; no ruin-loving ivy or pendant moss clings to it; nor graceful elms or

poetic lindens overshadow it. Formerly a steeple crowned its roof; but that was taken down, made into a summer house and placed in a garden.

“The Old Court House as we all know, owes its local fame to the fact that in it Daniel Webster made his first plea before a jury in 1806. His father was present and heard his speech, the only time, it is said, that he ever listened to his son’s eloquence at the bar. This was not a criminal case; but he afterward spoke in defense of a murderer in the old Meeting House, the Court House being too small to accommodate the crowd of listeners.

“Mr. Webster and his brother Ezekiel attended court here several years in succession.

“The old house still stands, where they boarded, and the lady who lives in it, though a child at the time of Mr. Webster’s stay at her father’s, remembers much concerning his words and ways.

“One day, she says, Mr. Webster was ill and remained at home; sitting in the large arm chair by the fireplace, he fell asleep; frightened, she ran out of the room to her mother, and cried, “Oh, dear, that man is dead!” But that Man’s powerful voice was yet to be heard in many cities. His eloquent words were needed in defense of Dartmouth College, at the dedication of the Bunker Hill Monument, and at Washington.

“In 1835, Mr. Webster visited the old Court House—now a shop—and wrote his name on its walls. Though redolent of paint and varnish, and carpeted with chips and shavings, it has many visitors, who come from love of him whose voice is silent, but whose thoughts still live.”

On page two of the paper is an editorial with its first paragraph as follows:

“Plymouth is wonderful in winter; delicious in summer; in

autumn it is a joy to live; and the spring air is exhilarating as the hopes of youth, and as energizing as a laudable ambition. But the dampness of March and April is something deplorable. Our village is then a temporary archipelago.”

This was the period when the State Normal School was established. A Village Improvement Association was transplanting elms and maples along the streets and the Village Common was purchased by the town and fenced and landscaped.

Dr. George H. Bowles recalled that he and Moses A. Batchelder followed their grandfathers and helped as much as two small cousins were able to plant the trees. Many of these are standing today while others fell in the hurricane of 1938, particularly along the east side of the Common. Dr. Bowles looked sadly at the fallen giant elms while he described his boyhood memories.

After the middle of the nineteenth century the White Mountain ice cream freezer was invented and manufactured by the family of Mr. Harrison F. Sargent who recalls his visits to the factory in his boyhood. In time, two gallon and larger sizes were produced and then the lawn party with ice cream for the attraction at a dime a heaping saucer became a summer event for the Social Circle. The process of preparing the freezers was not easy. The recipes called for dozens of eggs and quarts of real cream and several flavors were always provided. Wild strawberry juice was the favorite, but vanilla and third choice, lemon usually were on sale.

Every home possessed an ice house in a rural village. Great cakes of ice were cut and packed in sawdust during the coldest days of winter. On the day of the lawn party, youths were expected to cut the ice into small chunks, place them in a hemp bag and flay them with the broad side of an ax until small

pieces were ready for the freezer. Meanwhile the custard, never cooked, was prepared and turned into the metal cylinder ready to be set into the wooden tub and then surrounded with the ice and plenty of rock salt. After the dasher was inside the cylinder and clamped firmly above the cover, then by hand power and slow turning of the crank, the cream was frozen and packed with more ice and covered to ripen for hours.

No modern semi-circular servers were then invented. Strong iron spoons dipped generous heaps of the cream into saucers and seconds were the usual custom, with cakes of all varieties for an accompaniment. Afternoon and evening the lawn party continued with the village brass band to attract the audience. Many, many dollars have been gathered into the treasury of the Social Circle since the ice cream freezers were invented. Yet, long before this day ice cream was concocted. The writer's father, born in 1849, related that his first taste was when a small girl invited him, a very small boy, to join her in a dish that she purchased and called for two spoons.

Twenty years later the present chapel was constructed and afterward the records of the Social Circle list gifts of china, furniture, and hundreds of articles that were sold to promote the annual fairs that produced thousands of dollars as the years have passed by. A kitchen and diningroom occupied the upper rooms and conveniences that were modern at that day were installed. What those members of the Social Circle would exclaim could they enter the present well appointed kitchen of today can only be imagined. This illustrates the never ending continuity of the devotion of the women to those departments that the changing customs bring to the churches in the villages of New Hampshire.

A century has passed since 1858 when the Social Circle began to function. Without its assistance, many departments of

the church would not continue. To the women, the Sunday School owes its present existence. Without their musical talents the organ would remain silent many Sabbaths and the choir seats would be empty. The juniors would not be singing, the Vacation Schools would not flourish, the Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets would not be filled and distributed.

In the community, the women collect the dollars for the many charitable services to the sick and needy. Deeds of love and mercy, of hospitality and friendship, of thoughtfulness for the lonely and sympathy for the sorrowing, claim the leisure time of the organized womanhood of the church.

Without the constant mingling of men and women in the social life of the church, in cultural programs, in the Family Pot Luck and the Men's Club suppers, the progress of modern religious activity would stagnate. Changes advanced when food sales supplanted church suppers to increase the treasury, while rummage sales have proved most profitable in recent years.

The poet was right when he wrote, "Time makes ancient good uncouth." Certainly St. Paul would be obliged to change his mind about women in the churches were he to return to earth today.

Chapter VIII

THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

This fragmentary history may well close with a brief description of the celebration, on October 18 and 19, 1936, in honor of the close of a century since that New Year's Day in 1837 when the opening service dedicated our sanctuary.

Weeks of preparation had preceded this event with committees arranging the program. Both on the Sabbath and the following Monday evening, services were attended by audiences that filled every seat. A choir of thirty-two voices prepared anthems and appropriate hymns. Mrs. Harl Pease, the leader, played the Skinner organ, Harrison F. Sargent, the violin, Harold C. Freeman, the cornet and Melvin Otterson, the bass viol of 1837. Rudolph H. Wakefield, soloist in Boston, returned to his home town to add his tenor voice with several solos.

On Sunday morning, Rev. John C. Prince, the pastor, delivered an historical address about "The Story of the Old White Church in the Heart of Plymouth," which the "Record" published and which is preserved in many scrapbooks today.

In the evening, Rev. James F. English, Secretary of the Congregational Churches of Connecticut, spoke on the topic, "The Ministry of the Meetinghouse" with all of the ministers of the other churches in Plymouth participating in the program.

On Monday evening, the past and present were combined. The six deacons and a number in the congregation dressed in century old costumes and observed the customs of that period. The choir sat in the gallery during the opening of the service

while Mr. Wakefield impersonated a deacon and lined out the old hymns and the audience faced the rear during the singing.

Rev. Robert G. Armstrong, Secretary of the Congregational Churches in New Hampshire, spoke about "The Fellowship of our Churches." The choir marched to the front and rendered several classical anthems that closed the two-day programs.

A most important and enjoyable feature of this celebration was the exhibition of hundreds of articles that George G. Clark and his committee collected and arranged by decades beginning with the founding of the town. The list that appeared in the "Record" will be increasingly valuable as the years pass by, for no person except Mr. Clark possessed the knowledge about where to borrow such heirlooms, many of priceless value, that are to be found among the homes of Plymouth.

Over a thousand former residents and visitors from surrounding towns attended these events, proving that the power of our church is far reaching and calls homeward those who never forget "The Old White Church."

Within the safe in the pastor's study at the chapel, are records of this centennial that anticipate 1964 when two hundred years of history will be reviewed by the loyal citizens of Plymouth.



THE CENTENNIAL GROUP

FRONT: MRS. JOHN C. PRINCE. FIRST ROW: MRS. GEORGE A. BROWNE (EMILY WEBSTER), MISS CAROLINE RUTH LEVERETT, MRS. J. J. LOIZEAUX (MARGARET), DEACON CHARLES J. REED. SECOND ROW: MISS ELLEN A. WEBSTER, MRS. GEORGE H. BOWLES (CARRIE E.), DEACON ERNEST B. HARDY. TOP ROW: DR. GEORGE H. BOWLES, MRS. RAYMOND E. TILTON (MARIAN FOSTER), GEORGE R. FOSTER.

